THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Belgian Labour in Nazi Germany:
A Social History

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Doctor of Philosophy
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2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

The Nazis' deployment of foreigners (*Ausländereinsatz*) between 1939 and 1945 established one of the largest forced labour programs since the abolition of slavery during the nineteenth century. Foreign civilians from across Europe were deployed in Germany's war economy. Between 350,000 and 400,000 Belgian civilians were deployed in Germany during the Second World War – roughly half of these workers went to Germany voluntarily, but under a degree of pressure due to the Military Administration's economic policies in occupied Belgium.

This thesis examines the implementation of the Nazi forced labour program through the analysis of the lives of Belgians who worked in Germany in the period 1940-1945 and by using a variety of original sources, including the records of the German Military Administration in Belgium and German and Belgian labour officials and the accounts of those who lived and worked in Germany. This thesis proposes a social history of the Nazi foreign labour program with a strong focus on the history of everyday life, drawing extensively on records such as letters, diaries, photographs and personal accounts of Belgians who worked in Germany during the Second World War, as well as hospital, police and judicial records. The employment patterns and experiences of Belgians deployed in Germany are examined through detailed case studies of Berlin and Düsseldorf, industrialised cities where Belgians were deployed in significant numbers.

The Nazi regime divided Belgium's population along linguistic lines: Belgians were officially subject to differentiated treatment based on whether they were Flemings or Walloons. Examining the treatment of Belgians by the Nazi regime and comparing Nazi racial policies and practice, this thesis emphasises the key role played by local authorities, employers and individual Germans in shaping the experiences of foreign workers. It is argued that an important distinction must be made in relation to the material advantages western European workers enjoyed due to their elevated position in the Nazi racial hierarchy and the benefits individual foreign workers were able to secure by virtue of their employment skills, linguistic skills and greater confidence.

The experiences of Belgian workers are also compared and contrasted with those of other national groups and are related to the broader history of foreign labour in Nazi Germany. This study also examines the experiences of Belgian women. While Belgian women represented close to 15 percent of Belgians deployed in Germany, studies of Belgian labour in Germany have largely overlooked their experiences. Utilising the limited available sources, this thesis contributes to an understanding of women's experiences.

By focussing on the social history of the *Ausländereinsatz* and the stories of individual Belgians, this thesis maps the varied experiences of Belgians in Germany during the Second World War, illustrating convergence and divergence from Nazi racial policy and the fundamental role ordinary Germans played. More importantly, however, this thesis shows that Belgian civilian workers were not just passive victims of the German occupation. The decision to go to Germany to work was a personal one for many Belgian volunteers, based on individual circumstances. In difficult economic times and with no end to the war in sight, Belgians sought to navigate the best course for themselves and their families. While conscripts were by definition not free, as western Europeans Belgians were afforded greater rights and legal protections, which ensured they had room for manoeuvre and were able to exercise a significant degree of control over their own destinies.

Preface

Translations are by the author unless otherwise specified in the footnotes. English translations for the titles of organisations and offices are used throughout the thesis, with German, French and Flemish titles provided in the list of abbreviations and glossary at the end of this thesis.

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Appendices

Acknowledgements

As this project comes to an end, it is with great pleasure that I take the time to thank those who have provided assistance along the way.

I would like to thank Anne Jacquemin, Gert de Prins and others at the Service des Victimes de la Guerre in Brussels where much of my research was undertaken. In particular, I would like to thank Sylvie Vanderelst for her efforts in processing my many requests for files. I am grateful to the staff of the CEGES/SOMA whose initial guidance regarding archival materials helped me on my way. Fellow researchers at the CEGES/SOMA Hannelore Vandebroek and Gerlinda Swillen showed an interest my research. Our regular conversations regarding our intersecting interest in the experiences of Belgian women and children proved very fruitful. "The Foreign Labour in Wartime Germany: The Gender Perspective" symposium convened by the CEGES/SOMA in December 2008 provided an invaluable opportunity to present my research and meet other researchers working in the field. I am grateful to the staff at the Bundesarchiv, Landesarchiv Berlin, Nordrhein-Westfälisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf, Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf and the Red Cross International Tracing Service (ITS). Archivist Ms Gabriela Silva provided invaluable assistance at the ITS – an institution that has only recently opened its doors to researchers. Ms Silva offered attentive support during my short visit and sent me with copies of many documents after my visit. It must be said that the level of support provided by staff at the ITS is seldom encountered elsewhere.

Dr Joachim Schröder of the Heinrich Heine Universität Düsseldorf kindly provided advice regarding archival sources in Düsseldorf. I extend my thanks to fellow researcher Dr Herbert Reinke who offered useful tips during my visit to the Landesarchiv Berlin. Herbert generously shared his knowledge of Berlin's criminal subculture and the geography of crime and vice the city, providing insights into life in wartime Berlin that might otherwise have eluded me. Associate Professor Annette F Timm kindly provided a copy of her then unpublished doctoral dissertation. The German Historical Institute London Postgraduate Conference offered an opportunity to present my work and meet other postgraduate researchers. I am grateful to

Professor Neil Gregor for his feedback and encouragement to submit work for publication.

The completion of this thesis owes much to the support I received from the University of Edinburgh. I benefited from an ORS Award, ORS Linked Scholarship and a College of Humanities and Social Sciences Studentship. I also received a travel scholarship from the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) to undertake research in Germany.

Dr Steve Welch has acted as an invaluable mentor since my undergraduate days at the University of Melbourne. I would also like to thank Professors Kate Darian-Smith and Antonio Sagona for ensuring that I was granted access to the excellent research collection at the University of Melbourne Library.

Being based in Brussels for most of my PhD candidature opened up wonderful possibilities for research and enabled me to work with the archival records that are the backbone of my doctoral project. I am most grateful to Professor Jill Stephenson who encouraged and inspired me along the way. Her expert guidance helped me turn my extensive archival material into a thesis. I am indebted to Jill for her dedicated supervision, seeing me through to the end of my PhD, in spite of her own ill health. Professor Donald Bloxham also read some chapter drafts and research papers, offering useful feedback on my work. I would also like to thank Dr Louise Jackson for her participation in my review meeting and helpful feedback.

Finally, I could not have finished this thesis without the help of my family and friends. A special thank you must go to Ms Isa Delezenne and Ms Lokke Broux who assisted with childcare, making it possible for me to undertake research in archives in Belgium and Germany. Both also provided invaluable assistance with language, providing essential help with reading Flemish language texts. I would like to extend my thanks to my good friend Dr Hugh Hudson who kindly accepted the task of reading a final draft, providing helpful feedback. My five-year-old daughter Sarah has been with me from the very beginning of my doctoral program, travelling with me to Edinburgh and on research trips to Germany, and tolerating my attachment to my books, papers and computer with good humour. My husband Steve has been a constant source of encouragement and support, reading chapter drafts, despite his grumblings about my obsession with "dead Belgians".

INTRODUCTION

The Nazis' deployment of foreigners (*Ausländereinsatz*) between 1939 and 1945 established one of the largest forced labour programs since the abolition of slavery during the nineteenth century. The deployment of large numbers of foreigners within the borders of the Reich was anathema to Nazi ideologues, and Nazi leaders made the decision to deploy such large numbers of foreigners only after the outbreak of the Second World War. While early military successes allowed the Nazis to delay the wide-scale deployment of foreigners, significant numbers of Polish and French prisoners of war (POWs) had been put to work in Germany after the defeat of Poland and France in September 1939 and July 1940 respectively, along with smaller numbers from Holland, Belgium, Denmark and Luxembourg. Additionally, civilian workers recruited in Axis countries, such as Italy, were also deployed. Until the summer of 1941 the overwhelming majority of foreign civilians and POWs deployed in Germany worked in agriculture.[1] However, a labour shortage in Germany even before the outbreak of war, the failure of *Blitzkrieg* in the summer of 1941, and the reality that Germany was facing a drawn-out war of attrition, drove Nazi leaders to embark on a massive forced labour program. With little prospect of German soldiers returning from the front in the foreseeable future, the exploitation of foreign labour was essential to the German war economy: Germany could not maintain the necessary agricultural production to feed its population or produce the armaments necessary to wage war across Europe without foreign labour.

Millions of workers from occupied territories, from the Soviet Union in the east to Belgium in the west, were deployed in Germany and 26 percent of the German labour force was foreign by September 1944.[2] In addition to POWs, a total of 8.4 million foreign civilian labourers were employed in the German economy

[1] Ulrich Herbert, *Arbeit, Volkstum, Weltanschauung: Über Fremde und Deutsche im 20. Jahrhundert*, Originalausg. ed. (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1995), 124.
[2] Mark Spoerer and Jochen Fleischhacker, "Forced Labourers in Nazi Germany: Categories, Numbers, and Survivors," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 33, no. 2 (2002): 172. The last set of official statistics was issued by the Office of the Four Year Plan and the Plenipotentiary General for the Allocation of Labour in September 1944 in the official publication *Der Arbeitseinsatz im Großdeutschen Reich*, no. 11/12.

during the Second World War – most of whom were brought to Germany by force. Almost half a million foreign civilian labourers died in Germany or were sent to concentration camps.[3] While the deployment of POWs was common practice and did not contravene the Hague Convention of 1907, the conscription of millions of foreign civilians was a clear violation of the Hague Convention.

Foreign workers were subject to differentiated treatment based on a strict multi-tiered racial hierarchy. Workers from northern and western Europe, in particular Scandinavian, Dutch and Flemish workers who were considered "Germanic" (*deutsch-freundlich*), were treated humanely, and received wages almost on a par with "native" Germans. At the bottom of the Nazi racial hierarchy, Poles, Sinti, Romanies, Jews and those from the Soviet Union had no civil rights and were considered expendable. These workers were to be worked as hard as possible, accommodated in squalid conditions and allocated rations that barely covered the minimum levels required for survival. Russians, Poles, Sinti, Romanies and Jews were generally subject to a policy that amounted to annihilation through work, and experienced an appallingly high mortality rate due to malnutrition, exposure, disease and violence.

The German campaign to harness Belgian labour can be divided into three phases. From June 1940 until March 1942, recruitment for work in both Belgium and Germany was allegedly voluntary, although increasing pressure was applied to persuade Belgians to accept work assignments in Germany. Between March and October 1942, Belgians could be assigned jobs in Belgium, while work assignments in Germany continued to be voluntary. Finally, from October 1942 until the end of the German occupation in September 1944, Belgians were forced to accept jobs in Germany. A total of 350,000–400,000 Belgians worked in Germany during the Second World War – roughly half of whom went to Germany voluntarily, but under a degree of pressure due to the Military Administration's economic policies in occupied Belgium, which saw industries that were not critical to the war effort closed down thereby creating a pool of unemployed workers.[4] According to official German

[3] Ibid., 186-8.
[4] Mark Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz: Ausländische Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangene und Häftlinge im Deutschen Reich und im besetzten Europa 1939-1945* (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt 2001), 61.

figures, there were approximately 30,000 Belgian women working in Germany in September 1944, representing 14.7 percent of Belgian civilian workers.[5] Heavily industrialised Belgium promised much needed skilled industrial workers. The campaign to recruit Belgian workers was underpinned by Germany's need for skilled workers and most Belgians were deployed in industry.

Encouraging Flemish separatism in order to divide Belgium's population along linguistic lines, Nazi leaders reinstated the Flemish politics (*Flamenpolitik*) practised by German leaders during their country's occupation of Belgium in the First World War. Belgian workers were subject to differentiated treatment: Dutch-speaking Flemings enjoyed a more privileged status because the Nazis considered them to be members of a Germanic race; by contrast, French-speaking Walloons were considered to be lower in the racial hierarchy, and were grouped with French workers. The treatment of Belgian POWs illustrates the Nazis' *Flamenpolitik* at work. Flemish POWs were released soon after Belgium's capitulation, while 65,000 Walloon POWs were sent to Germany to work.[6] It is unclear why the Germans released Flemish POWs. One possible explanation is that the release of Flemings was part of a calculated policy of dividing Belgium internally, playing Flemings off against Walloons. More plausibly, it has been suggested that Flemish POWs were released because the Germans considered them to be of Germanic stock.[7] What is less clear is how this policy of unequal treatment of Flemings and Walloons worked in practice and to what extent Flemish workers' privileged status as members of a supposedly Germanic race translated into concrete benefits and whether this changed over the course of the war. The treatment of Belgian workers in Germany therefore offers an opportunity to examine Nazi racial policies at work.

1. Historiography

In the immediate post-war years West German historians evinced little interest in forced labour in Nazi Germany – a tendency that persisted well into the 1970s. Most

[5] Ulrich Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers: Enforced Foreign Labour in Germany Under the Third Reich*, trans. William Templer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 462.
[6] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 60. Cf. Edward L Homze, *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 47. Homze suggests that the number of Walloon POWs sent to Germany was 80,000.
[7] This conclusion is supported by the fact that a large proportion of other so-called "Germanic" POWs, including Dutch and Norwegian POWs, were released after the cessation of hostilities, after agreeing to certain conditions.

historical accounts of the forced labour program published in West Germany during the 1950s and 1960s were written by historians with close ties to German industry with the intention of refuting the charges of exploitation of foreign labour that were laid against German industrialists during the Nuremberg trials.[8] Proponents of this view argue that the Nazi state was a totalitarian regime and left German industrialists with little room for manoeuvre; German industry could not therefore be held accountable for exploitation of forced workers. West German historians categorised Nazi policy towards foreigners as basically value-neutral and generally acceptable in terms of overall social policy.[9] The one key exception to this early trend was Martin Broszat's study of Nazi policy in Poland, which included a detailed examination of the forced deportation of Polish workers.[10] By contrast, the forced labour program proved a favoured topic for East German historians who produced numerous monographs and documentary publications, generally interpreting the forced labour program from the standpoint of Marxist-Leninist theory.[11] Industrial monopolies were viewed as the driving force behind the war and responsibility for the forced labour program was attributed to big business; the role of state and Nazi Party organs was viewed as secondary.[12] Later, West German contributors to this debate, such as Ulrich Herbert and Andreas Heusler, produced more nuanced studies.

American historian Edward Homze's major study *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany* was published in 1967.[13] Homze's work is the only comprehensive study of

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[8] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 4.

[9] Key proponents of this view include: Otto Kranzbühler, *Rückblick auf Nürnberg* (Hamburg: Zeit-Verlag, 1949).; Thilo von Wilmowsky, *Warum wurde Krupp verurteilt? Legende und Justizirrtum* (Stuttgart: Econ-Verlag, 1950).; Hartwig Bülck, *Die Zwangsarbeit im Friedensvölkerrecht* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,, 1952).; August von Knieriem, *Nürnberg. Rechtlinie und menschliche Probleme* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1953).; Werner-Otto Reichelt, *Das Erbe der IG-Farben* (Düsseldorf: Econ-Verlag, 1956).; and Hans-Eckhardt Kannapin, *Wirtschaft unter Zwang. Anmerkungen und Analysen zur rechtlichen und politischen Verantwortung der deutschen Wirtschaft und der Herrschaft des Nationalsozialismus, besonders im Hinblick auf den Einsatz und die Behandlung von ausländischen Arbeitskräften und Konzentrationslagerhäftlingen in deutschen Industrie- und Rüstungsbetrieben* (Cologne: Deutsche Industrieverlag, 1966). Cf. Heusler who found that in Munich the impetus to employ foreign civilians and POWs came from businesses and employers. Andreas Heusler, *Ausländereinsatz: Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft 1939-1945*, vol. 1, Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte der Stadt München (München: Hugendubel, 1996), 421.

[10] Martin Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik 1939-1945* (Stuttgart: 1961).

[11] For an overview of the literature on the Nazi forced labour program published by East German historians see: Lothar Elsner and Joachim Lehmann, *DDR-Literatur über Fremdarbeiterpolitik des Imperialismus: Bemerkungen zur Forschungsstand und Bibliographie. Fremdarbeiterpolitik des Imperialismus* (Rostock: Wilhelm-Pieck-Universität, Sekt. Geschichte, 1979).

[12] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 4-5.

[13] Homze, *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany*.

the Nazis' foreign labour program published by a historian from the west before the 1980s. Herbert observes that Homze's pioneering study was never published in German translation and was little known in Germany, suggesting that Homze's work came too early for German historians who did not take a great interest in social history until the 1970s.[14] Homze emphasises the contradictions between Nazi ideology and practice, concluding, "The foreign labour program was, after all, a microcosm of the Nazi world – a curious mixture of improvisation, ideology, and opportunism".[15] Homze argues that the forced labour program was underpinned by the need to reconcile the national and racial doctrines of Nazism with the need for millions of foreign workers – two contradictory demands that the regime ultimately could not reconcile. According to Homze, the Nazis did, however, satisfy some of their racial doctrines through discrimination and the attempted segregation of foreigners, particularly those from the Soviet Union, from the German population. The harsh treatment of the foreigner, argues Homze, was organised in part for the psychological benefit of the German worker.[16] Certainly, Nazi policy-makers often showed sensitivity to German popular opinion.[17] The discrimination to which foreigners were subject in daily life emanated not only from the directives of Nazi leaders; ordinary Germans also participated in the mistreatment of foreigners. Homze concludes that while relations between western Europeans and Germans can be characterised as normal, the case of the *Ostarbeiter* ("eastern workers" – those from the Soviet Union) was different. Homze observes, "Eastern workers received little sympathy from the German working class... German behaviour toward the easterners was capricious, ranging from ferocity to affection".[18] Indeed, Homze stresses that the standard of living Germans enjoyed during the war came at the expense of foreign workers, and they were in this sense complicit in the maltreatment

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[14] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 5-6.
[15] Homze, *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany*, 311.
[16] Ibid., 291-2.
[17] A concrete example of how popular opinion helped shape Nazi policies towards foreigners is the fact that Martin Bormann, Head of the Party Chancellery, felt that it was necessary to inform the German population that improvements in the clothing and food provisions of Soviet POWs were only to improve their productivity. Jill Stephenson, *Hitler's Home Front: Württemberg under the Nazis* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), 269. Herbert's research also shows that in September 1941 there was public criticism in Germany over the need to feed millions of Soviet POWs. According to the Security Service, the German population felt it was improper to accommodate the "Bolsheviks" in any way. Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 155-6.
[18] Homze, *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany*, 294.

of foreigners. Later contributions to this debate, including that of Herbert, supported Homze's interpretation.

Homze emphasises how the interplay between racial ideology and economics affected the treatment of foreign workers. Following swift victories over Poland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway, Germany had a large pool of POWs at its disposal. Despite a serious shortage of skilled workers, especially in the metals industry and mining, more than half of the western European POWs were deployed in agriculture.[19] Many POWs were engaged in jobs that native Germans did not wish to undertake, further reinforcing the German worker's superior position. POWs were not employed outside agriculture in greater numbers until summer 1941. Thus racial ideology hindered the effective utilisation of foreign labour in the first years of the war. The changing fortunes of the war brought a shift in priorities:

> When victory seemed imminent, the racial considerations were far more pronounced than the economic ones. However, as the war progressed and the economic needs became increasingly urgent, the ideological-economic conflict was resolved through the gradual erosion of the ideology.[20]

As the war progressed, Nazi leaders were compelled to sacrifice racial policies and improve their treatment of foreign workers in order to gain maximum economic benefit from foreign workers, although victory in the war would no doubt have meant a return to the primacy of ideology. According to Homze, the Germans' growing reliance on foreign labour resulted in an increasing tendency to improve the conditions of foreign workers. The adoption of a more pragmatic approach eroded the Nazis' system of differentiated, treatment and "'eastern workers' status rose steadily from a place of marked inferiority to one of near-equality with western workers".[21] While the Nazis were prompted to improve easterners' conditions, westerners' conditions worsened during the war due to bombing and food shortages. Homze therefore concludes, "The foreign labour program was, then, throughout its existence a dynamic entity, evolving and changing with new problems and situations".[22] It is, then, important to consider temporal shifts and avoid generalisations. However, it is clear the treatment of foreign workers deteriorated

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[19] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 96.
[20] Homze, *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany*, 264.
[21] Ibid., 130.
[22] Ibid.

over time, with some of the worst treatment of foreign workers occurring in the later stages of the war at places like Dora-Mittelbau where slave labour was utilised for the construction of facilities and V-2 rocket production, and conditions were especially brutal and hazardous.[23]

The first comprehensive study of the *Wehrmacht's* (armed forces) murderous policies towards Soviet POWs, which included an examination of the deployment of Soviet POWs in German companies, was published by Christian Streit in 1978. Streit illustrates the close links between the forced labour program and the Nazis' policy of mass annihilation.[24] Approximately 5.7 million Soviet soldiers fell into German hands between June 1941 and January 1945, 3.3 million of whom perished in German captivity – 57.5 percent of all Soviet POWs captured by Germans forces.[25] The entire design of the campaign in the east, argues Streit, meant that large masses of prisoners were to be expected, and feeding the prisoners was not an inherently impossible task. Streit concludes that the more fundamental cause of the deaths was not the number of prisoners, but the war aims that were pursued in the east. Streit's study of the fate of Soviet POWs clearly illustrates how the Nazis were driven to adapt their policies due to the changing military situation. Following the collapse of *Blitzkrieg*, the German leadership decided to utilise large numbers of Soviet prisoners to alleviate labour shortages in October/November 1941. However, the greater proportion of Soviet POWs in *Wehrmacht* camps in the east had already perished and by the time Hitler and Hermann Göring gave approval for Soviet POWs and civilians to be deployed in Germany many of those still alive were too weakened to survive transport and subsequent deployment.[26] While Hitler conceded that Soviet

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[23] Laura J Hilton and John J Delaney, "Forced Foreign Labourers, POWs and Jewish Slave Workers in the Third Reich: Regional Studies and New Directions: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, August 2003.," *German History* 23, no. 1 (2005): 90. See André Sellier's study of Dora Mittelbau André Sellier, *A History of the Dora Camp: The Untold Story of the Nazi Slave Labour Camp That Secretly Manufactured V-2 Rockets*, trans. Stephen Wright and Susan Taponier (Chicago: Ivan R Dee in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2003). Also see Christine Somerhausen, *Les Belges déportés à Dora et dans ses kommandos* (Bruxelles: Centre Guillaume Jacquemyns, 1979).

[24] Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden. Die Wehrmacht und die Sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941-1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1978).

[25] Christian Streit, "Soviet Prisoners of War in the Hands of the Wehrmacht," in *War of Extermination: The German Military in World War II, 1941-1945*, ed. Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann (New York; Oxford: Berghan Books, 2004), 81.

[26] Ulrich Herbert, "Labour as spoils of conquest, 1933-1945 " in *Nazism and German Society, 1933-1945*, ed. David F Crew (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 222-3.

labourers would require adequate nourishment, Nazi leaders were unwilling to reduce the amount of food available for the German population; the rations for Soviet prisoners were increased, but still remained below the minimum level required for survival.[27] Thus while officially Soviet labourers were to receive adequate nourishment, in reality there was little meaningful improvement in their treatment. Detlev Peukert therefore contends, "The death rate among exhausted and undernourished Russians who were then deployed in Germany's armaments industry was so high that it can be viewed as an indicator of the continuation of the genocide".[28] Only in the later stages of the war did Nazi leaders adopt a more rational economic approach and improve the treatment of *Ostarbeiter* substantively. Herbert observes that effective improvements in living conditions for *Ostarbeiter* were not realised until after the defeat at Stalingrad in early 1943.[29] Streit's research also illustrated the pervasiveness of support for the Nazis' planned war of annihilation in the east within the ranks of the *Wehrmacht*, dispelling the myth of a "clean" *Wehrmacht* – the notion that the German military acquitted itself with honour during the Second World War and was not involved in the genocide against the Jews or other Nazi crimes.

Setting a new agenda in forced labour studies, Herbert's groundbreaking study of the Nazis' forced labour program was published in 1985 and in English language translation in 1997.[30] Herbert has published extensively on foreign labour in Germany.[31] Earlier studies of the forced labour program traced the genesis and planning of the program, its development, political decision-making and the role of leading Nazis, such as Fritz Sauckel, Plenipotentiary for Labour Deployment, and Albert Speer, Minister for Armaments and War Production, as well as central agencies in shaping the foreign labour program. Herbert, by contrast, examines the

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[27] Streit, "Soviet Prisoners of War in the Hands of the Wehrmacht," 87.
[28] Detlev Peukert, *Volksgenossen und Gemeinschaftsfremde. Anpassung, Ausmerze und Aufbegehren unter dem Nationalsozialismus* (Köln Bund-Verlag, 1982), 155.
[29] Ulrich Herbert, "Der »Ausländer-Einsatz« in der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft," in *Arbeit, Volkstum, Weltanschauung*, 127.
[30] Ulrich Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter: Politik und Praxis des "Ausländer-Einsatzes" in der Kriegswirtschaft des Dritten Reiches* (JHW Dietz, 1985). Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers.*
[31] Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland: Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter, Flüchtlinge* (München: Beck, 2001).; Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labour in Germany, 1880-1980: Seasonal Workers/Forced Labourers/Guest Workers*, trans. William Templer, Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990).; and Herbert, *Arbeit, Volkstum, Weltanschauung.*

foreign labour program firstly from the viewpoint of Nazi leaders, entrepreneurs and authorities, and then secondly from the perspective of the forced workers themselves. Herbert's study, which combined an examination of the political and social history of the forced labour program, established a model that was emulated in later studies. Herbert's work brought greater interest in the Nazi forced labour program in academic circles. Following the publication of Herbert's study of the Nazi forced labour program, professional historians have published major studies of foreign labour at regional and local level. Additionally, grass-root initiatives from history workshops and, in some cases, secondary school teachers and their students, have also led to a proliferation of research into local histories.

According to Herbert, the situation of forced workers varied significantly from workplace to workplace, camp to camp, between industry and agriculture, and there were glaring differences in treatment and food provision, particularly after 1942. Herbert argues that these differences indicate how much latitude individual employers had with respect to the treatment of their workers. By contrast with conservative West German historians, who argued that industrialists had little room for manoeuvre, Herbert concludes that foreign workers' appalling living and working conditions cannot be attributed solely to binding directives from the authorities.[32] Moreover, he argues, "Initiative shifted more and more to the regional, local and factory-based representatives of the regime, a process that climaxed in the escalating violence of the final phase of the war".[33] Local and regional studies have strengthened Herbert's contention that local and regional leaders and the employers of foreign workers exercised significant influence over the form that the *Ausländereinsatz* took.

The greater interest in social history that emerged during the 1970s also led historians to examine popular opinion and the attitudes of the German population towards foreign workers. Foreigners were deployed in almost all corners of Germany and were a ubiquitous feature of wartime life. According to Herbert, in total there may have been more than 20,000 camps housing foreign workers in the Reich and around 500,000 Germans were directly involved in various functions of the

[32] Herbert, "Der »Ausländer-Einsatz« in der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft", 127.
[33] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 388.

organisation of the *Ausländereinsatz*.[34] There can be few Germans who did not encounter foreign workers in their daily lives – whether as fellow workers or as inhabitants of villages, towns or cities. Herbert concludes:

> The picture that emerges from the mosaic of individual cases is that, on the whole, the vast majority of Germans evinced little interest in the fate of foreigners. They neither took part in ill treatment and harassment nor sympathised with the foreign labourers around them: they had enough problems of their own.[35]

Germans who turned a blind eye to the plight of foreign workers reflected a broader trend in Nazi Germany, as many Germans focussed on their individual interests during hard economic times.[36] Herbert stresses that foreign labour has been an important element of the modern German workforce for at least the last hundred years.[37] Rather than a rupture with the past, he argues that the Nazi forced labour program had its roots in a long tradition of discrimination against foreign workers in which some German workers participated to a certain degree.[38] Herbert contends that "most Germans did not even question the presence of millions of forced and slave-labourers in Nazi Germany, or their own position of racial privilege over these foreigners".[39] He therefore concludes, "The behaviour of the German population towards foreign labourers during the war indicates a tacit acceptance of national and 'racial' identity".[40] Nevertheless, Jill Stephenson emphasises that "where German civilians spoke in deprecating tones of Poles, for example, what they mostly displayed was less 'racial consciousness' than the xenophobic prejudice visible in virtually any community, then and now, as well as traditional *German* contempt for Poles".[41] An important distinction must be made between traditional German racism and genuine support for Nazi ideological tenets and racial policies.

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[34] Herbert, "Der »Ausländer-Einsatz« in der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft," 126.
[35] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 396.
[36] Martin Rüther, *Arbeiterschaft in Köln 1928-1945*, Kölner Schriften zu Geschichte und Kultur (Köln: Janus Verlagsgesellschaft, 1990), 42.
[37] Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labour in Germany*, 1.
[38] Herbert, "Labour as spoils of conquest." Stephenson similarly argues that the German industrial worker generally accepted and sometimes asserted his favoured position vis-à-vis foreign workers brought to Germany to serve for little reward, turning a blind eye to the degradation of fellow human beings whose basic humanity the regime had denied. Stephenson, *Hitler's Home Front*, 273.
[39] Herbert, "Labour as spoils of conquest," 220-1.
[40] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 396.
[41] Stephenson, *Hitler's Home Front*, 273.

Heusler's study of the use of forced labour in Munich's war economy is an excellent example of the shift away from macro-histories towards geographically focussed studies in recent years. Heusler examines how the *Ausländereinsatz* was implemented at a local level and the differences in how Nazi directives were implemented by large enterprises, on the one hand, and small and medium-sized enterprises, on the other hand. He argues that it was precisely in small and medium-sized enterprises that a sense of loyalty to foreign employees could prevail, and foreign workers could be viewed as colleagues, thus relativising Nazi discrimination against racial aliens.[42] According to Heusler, many managers in small and medium-sized enterprises made an effort to correct what they often saw as inhumane directives with respect to the treatment and food provision for foreign workers through extra rations, and equally sought to alleviate their heavy burden.[43] Heusler emphasises that the impetus behind these efforts was not only humanitarian reasons, but also pragmatism and consideration of productivity. In contrast to smaller enterprises, brutality and terror exercised by foremen, camp personnel and workplace security tended to go largely unchecked in larger concerns.[44] Heusler argues, however, that we should not simply assume that conditions in the camps and workplaces of large enterprises were thoroughly miserable and life-threatening, while idyllic living and working conditions reigned in small and medium-sized enterprises. Nevertheless, he finds that there is an obvious connection between the size and management structure of an enterprise and the living and working conditions of its foreign employees.[45] Heusler's study reinforces Herbert's contention that businesses played a key role in shaping their employees' living and working conditions. Heusler also illustrates the inherent contradiction between ideological precepts and the need to exploit foreign labour fully:

> It was this contradiction between ideologically-founded defamation, exploitation and terrorisation, on the one hand, and economics driven by the need to maximise armaments production, on the other hand, that was the cause of the grim social reality and the in many ways inhuman character of the *Ausländereinsatz*.[46]

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[42] Heusler, *Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft*, 424.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., 419.

The combination of a system of differentiated treatment based on a strict racial hierarchy and pressure to exploit foreign labour fully made the lot of many forced workers harder.

The need to maintain the labour of foreign employees also moved some employers to mitigate Nazi policies and improve the treatment of employees in substantive ways. As Heusler has shown, foreign workers employed in smaller enterprises had a lower chance of suffering neglect or abuse because they were less anonymous. The work of Stephenson and John J Delaney on the use of forced labour in rural communities has shown that similar principles operated on farms in southern Germany.[47] Nevertheless, Guillaume Jacquemyns' study of Belgian forced workers indicates that the experiences of those deployed in some of Germany's largest industrial concerns were not always negative. Some reported that their work environment was better in Germany than it had been in pre-war Belgium and even claimed that German employers treated them better and had greater respect and appreciation for their labour.[48] Conditions in some German factories were amongst the most advanced and the management amongst the most enlightened. These examples illustrate that foreign workers' experiences varied significantly even within the same economic sector and demonstrate the need for specificity when examining their experiences. Another issue that must also be considered is how workers' skills levels affected their treatment.

Stephenson researched forced labour as part of her broader study of Württemberg under the Nazis. In her view, "There was a noticeable gulf between even the less inhumane versions of official policy and the attitudes of at least some sections of the population". Despite the immense effort of political education from 1933, contends Stephenson, the ideology of the "master race" did not permeate German consciousness to the extent that the regime had intended.[49] While a series of directives and decrees prescribed how the German population was to treat foreign workers, right down to the last detail, many Germans, especially in rural areas, were

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[47] Jill Stephenson, "Triangle: Foreign Workers, German Civilians, and the Nazi Regime. War and Society in Württemberg, 1939-1945," *German Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (1992).; John J Delaney, "Racial Values vs. Religious Values: Clerical Opposition to Nazi Anti-Polish Racial Policy," *Church History* 70, no. 2 (2001).

[48] G Jacquemyns, *La société belge sous l'occupation allemande, 1940-1944: Les travailleurs déportés et leur famille*, 3 vols., vol. 3 (Bruxelles: Nicholson & Watson, 1950), 31-3.

[49] Stephenson, "Triangle: Foreign Workers, German Civilians, and the Nazi Regime," 341.

prepared to defy these injunctions.[50] Stephenson concludes that the treatment of foreign workers by German civilians in small towns and rural communities was underpinned by a combination of pragmatism, instinct (or "human nature") and conscious material self-interest.[51] Reinforcing Heusler's contention that there was a correlation between the size of an enterprise and how workers were treated, Stephenson finds that, "A direct correlation is discernible between a farm's need for labour and the extent to which the foreigners were treated favourably rather than brutally".[52] The scarcity of labour, and the simple fact that Germans in rural communities had much in common with the foreigners assigned to work in agriculture, undermined Nazi racial policies.

Delaney's study of the use of forced labour in small rural communities in Bavaria showed that, although they toiled in difficult working conditions and received artificially low wages, Polish agricultural labourers fared much better than their compatriots labouring elsewhere.[53] By contrast with Poles employed in other sectors, Polish agricultural labourers enjoyed some liberties, ate far better and even forged strong relationships within the peasant communities where they lived and worked. This point is supported by Stephenson's research, which shows that many foreign workers sought to protect their employers from the wrath of liberating forces.[54] Delaney concludes, "Clerical and peasant opposition made a very real and appreciable difference to the lives of thousands of Polish agricultural labourers".[55] The fundamental conditioning factor at work in Catholic Bavaria's many villages, argues Delaney, was a confessional one.[56] The deployment of large numbers of foreigners prompted Nazi fears about the threat "subhuman" Poles posed to German racial integrity and led to a series of regulations designed to control Poles and limit their contact with *Ostarbeiter*. These measures later served as a model for policies on the treatment of *Ostarbeiter*. However, according to Delaney, rural clergy continued to exercise their traditional authority at local level, undermining efforts by local Nazi officials to enforce racial policies. Catholic clergy not only welcomed Polish workers

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[50] Ibid., 342.
[51] Ibid., 343.
[52] Ibid., 343-4.
[53] Delaney, "Racial Values vs. Religious Values," 272.
[54] Stephenson, *Hitler's Home Front*, 290.
[55] Delaney, "Racial Values vs. Religious Values," 294.
[56] Ibid., 272.

into their congregations, allowing them to worship alongside German parishioners, but also extolled pious Poles as exemplary Catholics. Farmers and their families lived and worked at close quarters with foreign employees and their day-to-day experiences helped to dispel the claim that foreigners were "racially inferior". In some cases this familiarity led to compassion and understanding for the plight of foreign employees.[57] Foreigners deployed in agriculture were generally better treated than their compatriots in industry and consequently had a very high chance of survival. This point was later recognised in Germany's and Austria's compensation laws, which excluded forced workers who had been employed in agriculture from compensation. The proprietors of farms valued the labour of foreign employees and in many cases treated them relatively well in order to secure their cooperation and maximise the economic benefits of their labour. Additionally, traditional loyalty to the Church and pre-existing values, including humanitarian concern for fellow human beings, persisted. Ultimately, the campaign to win over the hearts and minds of the German population to the Nazi racial agenda seems to have failed in rural communities in southern Germany.

Germany and Austria passed laws to compensate forced workers in the wake of Germany's reunification, in July and August 2000 respectively.[58] The passing of compensation laws prompted a long overdue public debate about the forced labour program and financial compensation for former forced workers. The compensation laws also gave further impetus to research.[59] In recent years German archives have assigned priority status to unprocessed foreign labour records that have languished in their collections for many years. Regional archives played a key role in substantiating compensation claims.[60] The compensation laws also served as a

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[57] Stephenson, "Triangle: Foreign Workers, German Civilians, and the Nazi Regime," 351.

[58] For the background to these laws see Michael J Bazyler, "German Industry and Its Slaves," in *Holocaust Justice: The Battle for Restitution in America's Courts* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

[59] After the war all countries whose citizens were affected by Germany's forced labour program compiled evidence for compensation claims. However, in the London Debt Settlement of 1953 Germany's government managed to postpone reparations to a future peace treaty. The issue of reparations did not re-emerge until the 1990s when it came up as part of the Two-plus-Four Agreement, which paved the way for Germany's reunification. Mark Spoerer and Jochen Fleischhacker, "The Compensation of Nazi Germany's Forced Labourers: Demographic Findings and Political Implications," *Population Studies* 56, no. 1 (2002): 6.

[60] An excellent brochure has been produced by the Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf detailing the methods and sources used by archivists in responding to enquiries from former forced workers. Hans-Joachim

catalyst for Mark Spoerer and Jochen Fleischhacker's groundbreaking work on the quantitative aspects of the forced labour program.

The *Ausländereinstaz* has been a subject of intense scholarly interest since the publication of Herbert's study; however, most research focused on qualitative aspects of the forced labour program. Spoerer and Fleischhacker observe, "When compensation for forced labourers emerged as a serious issue in 1998, the lack of quantitative data became painfully obvious".[61] According to Herbert, there were 7.6 million civilians and POWs working in Germany in August 1944. However, estimates of the total number of forced workers (civilians, POWs and inmates) brought to Germany between 1939 and 1945 range from ten to fifteen million. These wide variations can be ascribed to some key constraints in the available sources. Firstly, the official statistics relate to specific reporting dates and do not take into account workers who had departed, those who went to Germany after a reporting date, double-counts or workers who were deceased. Moreover, the statistics do not include concentration camp inmates or other interned labourers. The available statistics therefore had significant shortcomings: all estimates were ad hoc and no study had ever compiled or calibrated the statistical evidence scattered across archives and existing publications. Spoerer and Fleischhacker sought to synthesise the statistical evidence in order to estimate the number of foreign labourers deployed in the German war economy and how many survived until mid-1945, thus providing an estimate of how many survived until mid-2000 when the German and Austrian governments passed compensation laws. According to Spoerer and Fleischhacker's findings, around eleven million forced workers survived the war and roughly a quarter, an estimated 2.7 million, were alive when compensation laws were passed.[62] Spoerer and Fleischhacker pointed to significant flaws in the German government's compensation system. Under the compensation scheme certain national groups were excluded from compensation, while the distribution of compensation among the foundations that represented national groups resulted in some groups receiving a higher share of the funding than would be expected from historical and demographic

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Neisser, "Zwangsarbeiter in der Stadt Düsseldorf: Langsam kommt Licht in ein dunkles Kapitel," accessed 9 May 2007, http://www.duesseldorf.de/thema/zwangsarbeit/pdf/zwang2.pdf.

[61] Spoerer and Fleischhacker, "Forced Labourers in Nazi Germany," 171.

[62] Spoerer and Fleischhacker, "The Compensation of Nazi Germany's Forced Labourers," 15.

evidence. Spoerer subsequently published a comprehensive study that provides an overview of the historiography and draws together the research findings.[63]

The first studies of Belgian labour during the German occupation appeared soon after the war. In 1946 Piet Potargent published his study of the conscription of Belgian labour. Potargent had served as the director of the Tongres branch of the Belgian National Employment Service during the war and the Military Administration had subsequently interned Potargent in the Breendonk concentration camp. After the war Potargent headed a cabinet within Belgium's Ministry for Reconstruction. Potargent's study focussed on German labour policies in occupied Belgium and had a strong legal and political focus.[64] Sociologist Jacquemyns' major study of Belgium under German occupation was published soon after the war.[65] The third volume of Jacquemyns' study focuses on the material and psychological consequences of forced labour in Germany and the morale of workers and their families and is based primarily on letters that workers wrote to their families and oral accounts.

The Centre for the Research and Documentation on War and Contemporary Society (CEGES/SOMA) led an initiative to document the experiences of Belgian deportees in the late 1960s and 1970s. Archivist Frans Selleslagh oversaw the completion of the *Enquête Travail Obligatoire* survey and a survey on the activities of the Young Christian Workers (KAJ) in Germany. Selleslagh published a general survey of Belgian labour in Germany and an edited volume containing documents relating to German labour policies in occupied Belgium. Selleslagh also published an article on the activities of the KAJ among deportees.[66] A number of studies of the German labour policies in Belgium appeared during the 1970s. Jean Culot and

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[63] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz.*

[64] P Potargent, *De tewerkstelling van Belgische arbeidskrachten in het binnen- en buitenland tijdens de bezetting* (1946). A French-language edition was published in 1948 as P Potargent, *La mise au travail de la main-d'oeuvre belge dans le pays et à l'étranger durant l'occupation* (Brussels: Edimco SA, 1948).

[65] Jacquemyns, *Les travailleurs déportés.*

[66] Frans Selleslagh, ed., *L'Emploi de la Main D'Oeuvre Belge sous L'Occupation 1940*, vol. 1, Documents (Brussels: Centre de Recherches et D'Etudes Historiques de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, 1970).; Frans Selleslagh, "L'emploi," in *1940-1945. La vie quotidienne en Belgique. [Exhibition catalogue: Bruxelles, Galerie CGER, 21 décembre 1984 - 3 mars 1985]*, ed. R Coolen (Bruxelles: CGER, 1984).; Frans Selleslagh, "De clandestiene KAJ in Duitsland (1942-1945)," in *De KAJ, haard van verzet. Hun mooiste uur*, ed. F Hugaerts, et al. (Gent: Reinaart Uitgaven-Het Volk, 1989).

Mathias Haupt produced theses on the forced labour program in Belgium.[67] Erik Pertz published a study on the deployment of Belgians from Kortrijk in Germany.[68] Christine Somerhausen published a study of Belgian workers who were deported to the Dora-Mittelbau concentration camp.[69] Dirk Luyten emphasises that, in line with the dominant trend in Belgian historiography, the focus of these studies lay predominantly on the organisations.[70]

The fiftieth anniversary of the introduction of the compulsory labour draft in Belgium brought renewed interest and the publication of new studies. The published proceedings of a symposium organised by the CEGES/SOMA in 1992 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the introduction of the compulsory labour draft shed greater light on a range of aspects of the forced labour program.[71] American historian Werner Warmbrunn also examined labour policy as part of his broader study of the German occupation of Belgium.[72] In 2001 Belgian historian Pieter Lagrou published an important comparative study of the legacy of Nazi occupation of western Europe. Lagrou examined the issue of labour conscripts within his study of national recovery and memory of the Second World War in Belgium, France and the Netherlands.[73] Frank Seberechts published a Dutch-language study of the experiences of Flemish forced workers, which is based primarily on letters sent by Flemish workers to friends and family at home, in particular by members of the KAJ.[74] The Stichting Holländerei has published an edited volume on Dutch and Flemish forced workers,

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[67] Jean Culot, "Le travail obligatoire des Belges décrété par l'autorité militaire allemande d'occupation 1940-1944" (Dissertation, Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1968-1969).; Mathias Georg Haupt, "Der 'Arbeitseinsatz' der belgischen Bevölkerung während des Zweiten Weltkrieges" (PhD Dissertation, Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Bonn, 1970).

[68] Erik Pertz, "La Mise au Travail des Cortraisiens en Allemagne (1940-1945)," *Cahiers d'Histoire du Temps Présent* 4 (1976).

[69] Somerhausen, *Les Belges déportés à Dora et dans ses kommandos.*

[70] Dirk Luyten, "Annotated Bibliography: Occupation in Europe. The Impact of National Socialist and Fascist Rule de l'European Science Foundation," (2004), accessed 11 August 2011, http://www.cegesoma.be/docs/media/Bibliographies/Bibliography_ESF.

[71] CEGES/SOMA, ed., *De verplichte tewerkstelling in Duitsland = Le travail obligatoire en Allemagne, 1942-1945 (proceedings of a conference held at the CEGES/SOMA 6-7 October 1992* (Bruxelles: CREHSGM/NCWO II, 1993).

[72] Werner Warmbrunn, *The German occupation of Belgium 1940-1944* (New York: Lang, 1993).

[73] Pieter Lagrou, *The legacy of Nazi occupation: patriotic memory and national recovery in Western Europe, 1945-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[74] Frank Seberechts, *Hier gaat alles zijnen gewonen gang: de verplichte tewerkstelling in Duitsland tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2005).

concentration camp prisoners and POWs in Berlin.[75] David M Watts produced a comparative history of German forced labour deportations during the two world wars.[76] More recently the CEGES/SOMA commissioned a project on the professional experiences of Belgian working women during the Second World War, which encompasses the experiences of Belgian women who worked in Germany. While much research has been undertaken into German labour policies and the development of the forced labour program in Belgium, much research into the experiences of Belgian workers in Germany and differentiated treatment of Flemings and Walloons is still needed.

2. Towards a model for examining forced labour

Firstly, it is necessary to devote some attention to the meaning of the term "forced worker", both generally and in the context of the *Ausländereinsatz*. It is not easy to define who was a forced worker and, despite the large body of historiographical research surrounding the topic of forced labour, the term still has no generally accepted definition. The term encompasses a wide range of workers without differentiating between their vastly differing experiences. The term "forced labour" denotes, in the broader sense, labour that was "unfree". That is to say workers were denied normal freedoms and rights; they were bound to their employer and did not have the right to choose their place of employment freely or change their employment as they wished. Almost all workers in Nazi Germany, including "native" German workers, can be broadly defined as "forced workers" due to restrictions placed on changing employment.[77] A comprehensive model for analysing the experiences of forced workers is needed to allow for a meaningful discussion of the varied experiences of foreign workers in Nazi Germany.

The Nazis referred to all involuntary workers as "*Zwangsarbeiter*" (forced workers). During the Nuremberg trials the term "slave labour" was used to describe the Nazi *Ausländereinsatz*. The general term slave labour encompassed a wide range

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[75] Stichting Holländerei, ed., *Niederländer und Flamen in Berlin 1940-1945: KZ-Häftlinge, Inhaftierte, Kriegsgefangene und Zwangsarbeiter*, vol. 126, Reihe Deutsche Vergangenheit (Berlin: Hentrich, 1996).

[76] David Michael Watts, "'Just like free labourers, but under police supervision': German forced labour policy in Belgium, 1916-1917 and 1942-1944" (PhD, Brandeis University, 2002).

[77] German law prohibited all workers from changing their employment without explicit approval from the labour office.

of experiences and failed to differentiate adequately between the various manifestations of the foreign labour program. The earliest historical accounts of the forced labour program recognised its complexity and the inherent problems with the use of the term "slave labour":

> Undoubtedly, there was "slave labour" in the concentration camps, and undoubtedly forced labour was an extermination device practised by the Nazis against peoples they considered inferior... yet it would be a gross error to assume that the single term "slave labour" could accurately describe a complex and constantly changing labour program involving millions of workers over a six-year period.[78]

Emphasising the varieties of experience between different groups of foreign workers and temporal shifts, Homze argues that the stereotype of slave labour applied at the Nuremberg war crimes trials was too inclusive and imprecise. One point on which historians are in agreement is that an important distinction must be made between concentration camp inmates and other groups of forced workers. Benjamin B Ferencz coined the term "less-than-slaves" to describe the treatment of Jewish concentration camp workers. Slaveholders, observes Ferencz, care for their human property and try to preserve it. By contrast, the Nazis intended that "Jews would be used up and then burned". Ferencz highlights the inadequacies of language when writing about the destruction of European Jews: "The term 'slave' is used because our vocabulary has no precise word to describe the lowly status of unpaid workers who are earmarked for destruction".[79] Historians have subsequently sought to differentiate between the various groups of workers from volunteer, conscripts or forced workers, POWs and concentration camp inmates. Even when forced workers are divided into separate categories, depending on the specific circumstances of their employment in Germany, these categories also prove to be problematic because an individual's position was not necessarily static and some workers changed category: some POWs were "converted" to civilian status during the course of the war; workers who initially went to Germany as volunteers were prevented from returning to their home at the end of their contracts and effectively became forced workers.

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[78] Homze, *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany*, 298.

[79] Benjamin B Ferencz, *Less than slaves. Jewish forces Labour and the Quest for Compensation* (London: Harvard University Press, 1979), xvii. Cf. Herbert, "Labour as spoils of conquest," 220.; Spoerer and Fleischhacker, "Forced Labourers in Nazi Germany," 171.

In 2000 the German government established the legal definitions of enforced, forced and slave labour within the context of compensation laws. Hilton and Delaney observe that these legal definitions "form too rigid a scheme to encompass the wide range of victim experiences from 1933-1945 about which historians write".[80] The historical reality of the Nazis' use of coerced labour, argue Hilton and Delaney, is best described as a continuum that stretches from obligatory, to enforced, forced and on to slave labour.[81] Hilton and Delaney emphasise the necessity of developing new and flexible definitions of forced and slave labour, which allow for temporal shifts.

As a starting point for their quantitative research on the forced labour program, Spoerer and Fleischhacker set out to establish a definition of forced labour and a framework for interpreting the various manifestations of forced labour during the Third Reich. They argued:

> A sensible definition of forced labour and the different degrees thereof, must take into consideration the conditions of life and work. Four criteria are critical: (1) was the worker able to end the employment relationship in the short term? (2) Was he or she able to enforce legal standards concerning the conditions of life and work? (3) Would he or she have any voice in complaining about the conditions of life and work? (4) Was his or her probability of surviving similar to that of a normal (native) worker?[82]

The application of Spoerer and Fleischhacker's four key criteria produces four categories of foreign workers in Germany: privileged, forced (in a narrow sense), slave and less-than-slave. Privileged workers included Italians, Croats and Slovaks. Particular attention must be paid to varieties of experience and how the treatment of individual national groups changed over time. The position of national groupings within the racial hierarchy was by no means fixed, as the case of Italian Military Internees (IMIs) illustrates. Italian workers took up voluntary employment in Germany under the auspices of an agreement concluded between Fascist Italy and Germany in 1937. As citizens of an Axis state, Italians enjoyed a privileged status and could end their employment contract and return home. However, Italian soldiers were captured and transferred to Germany after the fall of Benito Mussolini in July 1943 and the Badoglio government's "treachery" in declaring war on Germany on 13 October 1943. By contrast with Italian civilian workers, IMIs were subjected to

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[80] Hilton and Delaney, "Regional Studies and New Directions," 86.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Spoerer and Fleischhacker, "Forced Labourers in Nazi Germany," 174.

treatment on a par with that inflicted on *Ostarbeiter* and were amongst the groups who suffered the most severe brutality.[83] French, Belgian, Czechs, Dutch and Serbian workers fall under the category of forced workers. This is interesting because this category includes both "Aryan"-related, Latin and Slav nationalities. Poles and Soviet workers come under the category of slave workers. In the category of less-than-slave workers came Polish Jews, concentration camp inmates (all nationalities), working Jews, IMIs and labour education camp (*Arbeitserziehungslager*) or AEL inmates. Within this framework, German workers are regarded as forced labourers (in the broad sense) only if they experienced internment in a concentration camp or AEL. Aside from racial considerations that determined a worker's position in the racial hierarchy, the role of gender is another dimension that must also be considered.[84] Spoerer and Fleischhacker's model for analysing forced labour will be used as the basis in this study of Belgian workers. The role of gender in shaping Belgian workers' experiences will also be examined.

The place of the Nazi *Ausländereinsatz* in the history of foreign labour in Germany has been consistently debated in the historiography. Two key trends can be observed in early studies. Some scholarly treatments of the deployment of foreigners in Nazi Germany have subscribed to the notion that the *Ausländereinsatz* was part of a continuation of "normal" labour migration in Europe. Adherents of this approach argue that the employment of foreigners on such a massive scale is not specific to Nazism and is a phenomenon associated with industrialised societies generally. Other historians describe the forced labour program as an unending process of humiliation, harassment, maltreatment and crime. Crucially, the latter emphasise the role of racist ideology in the treatment of foreign workers. It was not until the 1980s that these initial interpretations began to be replaced with more complex analyses. Peukert rightly reminds us, however, that while the Nazi *Ausländereinsatz* can be viewed as an integral phase in recent German history, it is differentiated by its racist foundations, which struck a blow at the notion of the fundamental equality of all men.[85] Herbert similarly argues, "The truth is not located in the middle. Rather the

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[83] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 83-4.
[84] See Gabriela Hauch, "Zwangsarbeiterinnen und ihre Kinder: Zum Geschlecht der Zwangsarbeit," in *NS-Zwangsarbeit: Der Standort Linz der "Reichswerke Hermann Göring AG Berlin" 1938–1945*, ed. Oliver Rathkolb (Vienna: 2001).
[85] Peukert, *Volksgenossen und Gemeinschaftsfremde*, 154.

difficulty lies in combining the two approaches... but without blurring the contours".[86] By contrast with the more nuanced approach to the *Ausländereinsatz* proposed by Peukert and Herbert, accounts of labour policy in occupied Belgium have emphasised that the approach adopted by the Military Administration can be divided into distinct phases. Potargent divides the occupation of Belgium into three phases. The first period, from June 1940 until March 1942, was characterised by the *modus vivendi* that was reached between the Military Administration and Belgian officials. Potargent stresses the voluntary nature of the recruitment of Belgian workers for employment in Germany during this period. The second phase, from 6 March 1942 until 6 October 1942, saw the introduction of compulsory labour assignments in Belgium, while recruitment for employment in Germany remained voluntary. In the third phase, from 6 October 1942 until end of the occupation in September 1944, compulsory labour assignments were extended to include transfer to Germany. This final phase was characterised by the recruitment drives ordered by Sauckel and the deportation of large numbers of Belgians to Germany.[87] Like Potargent, Warmbrunn also divides the German occupation of Belgium into three phases.[88] Dutch historian BA Sijes adopts a similar approach, dividing the German occupation of the Netherlands into two periods: during the first phase from June 1940 until March 1942 surplus workers – primarily the unemployed – were forcibly exported to Germany; in the second phase, the Dutch civilian administration deported large numbers of Dutch workers under Sauckel's orders.[89] It will be argued here that earlier trends in labour migration also persisted alongside more coercive forms of labour mobilisation during the German occupation of Belgium, particularly in parts of Germany that were geographically close to Belgium like the Rhine-Ruhr region.

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[86] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 383.
[87] Potargent, *La mise au travail de la main-d'oeuvre belge.*
[88] Warmbrunn, *The German occupation of Belgium*, 225.
[89] BA Sijes, "Dutch Forced Labour in Germany, 1940-1945. A study in administrative collaboration," in *13th International Congress of Historical Sciences. International Committee on the History of World War II.*

3. Methodology

The *Ausländereinsatz* has been the topic of intense interest for a number of years. Major studies of the forced labour program have revealed much about its development and the role played by the Nazi Party, leading Nazis and state organisations, as well as the general prescriptions for the treatment of foreign workers. However, far less research has been carried out on the role of local and regional authorities and employers in the implementation of the forced labour program. Localised studies offer valuable insights into how the forced labour program operated in practice and also contribute to broader understandings of how the Nazi regime functioned. Heusler emphasises that historiographical contributions to the debate surrounding the *Ausländereinsatz* fall into two main categories: contributions to the first category consist of older monographs, which focus on the role of central agencies in shaping the forced labour program; and, on the other hand, a large body of multifaceted research that has come out of work inspired by local and regional histories. He observes that a "fruitful interaction between the two types of literature has only seldom been found".[90] Further work is needed to analyse the differences and similarities that have been highlighted in the many local and regional studies in order to reshape our understanding of forced and slave labour at macro-level. It is this body of scholarship that this thesis attempts to augment.

This thesis examines the implementation of the *Ausländereinsatz* through a study of Belgian workers who were deployed between 1940 and 1945.[91] It utilises a range of documentary sources, from the records of the Military Administration and German and Belgian labour officials, to the accounts of Belgians who worked in Germany. This thesis proposes a social history of the Nazi forced labour program with a strong focus on the history of everyday life, drawing extensively on letters, diaries, photographs and the personal accounts of Belgians who worked in Germany, which hitherto have been an under-utilised resource in studies of the deployment of Belgians in wartime Germany. Their experiences are compared and contrasted with those of other national groups and are related to the broader history of foreign labour

[90] Heusler, *Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft*, 12.

[91] This thesis will therefore focus on Belgian workers and will not examine the experiences of workers from the annexed part of northern France.

in Nazi Germany. Most Belgian civilian workers were employed in industry, with comparatively few Belgian civilians deployed in agriculture. This thesis aims to extend the detailed research that has been undertaken into the use of forced labour in rural Germany through an examination of Belgian workers employed in German industry. The experiences of Belgians deployed in Germany will be examined through case studies of Berlin and Düsseldorf, industrialised cities where Belgians were deployed in significant numbers. This approach will also allow for an examination of Belgian women, many of whom worked in German industrial centres.

Studies of the forced labour program have shown that occupational skills or a lack thereof had a tremendous impact on foreign forced workers' recruitment, deployment, treatment and survival rates.[92] This argument certainly holds true in the case of Jewish workers, whose very survival was determined by their capacity to undertake productive work. But how did occupational skills affect western Europeans who did not face the threat of destruction? Homze argues that German officials were also much more selective in the workers they recruited. They sought skilled workers in particular, and the placement of the workers reflected care in recruitment.[93] This study of Belgian workers provides an ideal vehicle to examine how occupational skills affected the treatment of foreign workers because a high proportion of Belgians were skilled industrial workers who were recruited with the specific aim of alleviating skills shortages in the German labour market. Specific questions that will be examined include: what methods were employed by German labour officials to recruit workers and allocate work assignments; to what extent were the jobs assigned to Belgian workers matched to their previous professional skills and experience; and did Belgians exercise the same profession in Germany as they had in Belgium? Research has shown that employers introduced incentives such as extra rations to encourage higher productivity. To what extent were skilled Belgian workers able to obtain better paid jobs and did they benefit from incentive-based pay scales? Aside from quantifiable differences such as pay differentials depending on a worker's skills, non-quantifiable benefits will also be considered. In the case of highly-skilled workers whose skills were valued by their employers, did

[92] Hilton and Delaney, "Regional Studies and New Directions," 94.
[93] Homze, *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany*, 45.

their professional skills afford them better treatment and more flexible work arrangements than their unskilled colleagues?

Belgian workers were divided along linguistic lines and were subject to differentiated treatment based on whether they were Flemings or Walloons. The differentiated treatment of Belgians is a key focus of this study and reveals much about Nazi racial practice. To what extent did Flemings benefit from their privileged status, as members of a supposedly Germanic race? A command of the German language was more common amongst Flemings and the similarities between German and Dutch also meant that Flemings found it easier to grasp the German language.[94] What role did language skills play in workers' dealings with the German population? Did a command of German bring greater opportunities to improve one's material position? There is a substantial gap in the research with respect to foreign workers' lived experiences. Studies of Belgian labour in Nazi Germany have focused on labour policy in occupied Belgium. A key focus of this study is the lives of Belgian workers, some of whom spent most of the war years working in Germany. The use of accounts provided by Belgians who worked in Germany during the war offers new insights into the realities of the foreign labour program. Hilton and Delaney observe, "Historians know little about the internal structure and social dynamics of the forced-labour 'community' and tend to discuss them collectively as one homogenous group or as cohesive national sub-groups. A closer look reveals profound differences".[95] This thesis explores many aspects of Belgian workers' experiences: the circumstances of conscription and transport to Germany; their treatment upon arrival and during their first days and weeks in Germany; their working lives; the impact of bombing; the treatment they received from German work colleagues, employers and camp personnel, as well as the wider German public; life in the camps; the role of the work and camp community; the social and leisure time activities; and Belgians' experiences during the final months of the war and liberation. A key focus of this study is the housing of Belgian workers. Many larger employers set up camps to house their workers either on the factory grounds or close by. Workers employed at large industrial concerns were therefore more likely to be housed in camps rather than in private lodgings. How common was it for workers to be accommodated in

[94] Jacquemyns, *Les travailleurs déportés*, 64-5.
[95] Hilton and Delaney, "Regional Studies and New Directions," 90.

private lodgings and how did this change over the course of the war? Did Flemings and Walloons both have opportunities to take up private accommodation? What benefits and disadvantages did housing in private lodgings bring? How did German landlords treat Belgian lodgers? This thesis is a social history of Belgian labour in Nazi Germany and focuses on lived experiences – a history which has been obscured by overemphasis on official decrees and directives. This thesis will argue that, regardless of racial ideology, there was not much difference in the treatment of Flemings and Wallons in Germany. This study of Belgian workers reveals much about the treatment of western European workers on the whole and contributes to a broader understanding of the *Ausländereinsatz*. Wherever possible, the treatment of Belgian workers is compared and contrasted with the treatment of other national groups.

Furthermore, women made up 14.7 percent of Belgian civilian workers deployed in the Reich, yet the deployment of Belgian women has remained largely overlooked within the studies of Belgian labour in Germany. How were female workers treated? To what extent were women's experiences similar to or different from those of men? What sorts of jobs did women undertake? Were they generally housed in camps or private lodgings? By contrast with the wealth of information provided by male workers, the available sources relating to Belgian women who went to Germany are sparse. The Service for the Victims of the War (SVG/DO) in Brussels holds the records of 78,801 Belgians who applied for official recognition as labour deportees after the war. Crucially, however, only 746 women applied for official recognition under the Statute for Deportees.[96] Women are therefore evidently underrepresented amongst those who sought official recognition as deportees, although the reasons for this are unclear. The conscription of Belgian women sparked public outrage in Belgium and genuine fear about the moral threat deployment in Germany posed for women. The reported moral degradation of young women who went to Germany was a key element of protests against the conscription of women. Women returning to Belgium faced social stigma and many were probably reluctant to admit that they went to Germany. The period of their deportation was perhaps a

[96] Hannelore Vandebroek, "Ongekend is onbemind: vrouwelijke weggevoerden voor verplichte tewerkstelling in Duitsland (1942-1945) en de archieven van de Dienst voor de Oorlogschlachtoffers," *Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent/Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse Geschiedenis* 19 (2008): 186.

fleeting experience for some women, as many female conscripts managed to return home within months.[97] Another possible explanation is that fewer women were aware of their entitlements. Many women who submitted applications reported that they became aware of the Statute for Deportees by word of mouth through friends or work colleagues; as a result, applications tend to cluster around certain districts. Given that work networks played a role in spreading information about the Statute for Deportees, women who had left the workforce to raise a family were probably less likely to apply. Women often submitted late applications because they did not become aware of the Statute for Deportees until after the deadline for applications had passed. Some women reported that upon making enquiries at their local police station or with administrative authorities they were told that the Statute was for men and resisters, and did not apply initially because they had been led to believe that they were not eligible.

4. Sources

The *Enquête Travail Obligatoire* survey of former forced workers was conducted by the CEGES/SOMA in conjunction with the National Association of Labour Deportees and Labour Draft Evaders (FNTDR/NVWW).[98] The CEGES/SOMA amassed a large collection of documents from survey respondents, including conscription orders, as well as items such as work and camp identification cards, fine notices from employers or camp authorities, employment records (*Arbeitsbuch*), Belgian passports and provisional passports issued by German authorities, payslips, as well as photographs, letters, theatre tickets and diaries. In the years that followed many deportees also lodged lengthy written accounts of experiences in Germany. Interestingly, although women were represented in the membership of the FNDTR/NVWW, few women responded to the survey.

The records of the SVG/DO are a key source of information on Belgians who worked in Germany during the Second World War. The SVG/DO is a department within the Belgian Federal Public Service for Social Security and presides over records relating to victims of the Second World War, including forced workers, Jews

[97] Belgian women and married men were normally granted leave after six months in Germany, while single men were generally not granted leave until they had served a year in Germany.
[98] The survey was published in the FNDTR/NVWW newsletter in 1971. CEGES/SOMA, AA1216.

and Belgian internees of concentration camps and prisons (in both Belgium and Germany). After the war 400 Belgian Liaison Officers (BLO) from the Belgian Commission for Repatriation were sent to Germany to organise the repatriation of Belgian citizens and gather information about Belgian victims of the Nazi regime. Officers gathered a wealth of material, including residence lists, as well as employment, judicial, prison and hospital records.[99]. The SVG/DO also holds wartime records from the Belgian National Labour Office (ONS). Files relating to applications under the Statute for Deportees are the main source of information on individual forced workers. Following the war the Belgian government passed laws that entitled former forced workers to official recognition as labour deportees. Belgium's Ministry for Public Health was responsible for investigating and assessing applications under the Statute for Deportees. Records relating to applications under the Statute for Deportees have certain limitations, as officials focused on the circumstances of a worker's departure for Germany in order to establish whether they were volunteers or conscripts and the length of their stay in Germany. The files therefore provide scant information about their experiences in Germany. The SVG/DO also holds 600,000 Service Documentation et Recherches (SDR) files on Belgian civilian victims or those living in Belgium at the time of the war. These administrative files were created for the purpose of assessing applications under the various statutes for the victims of the war and in relation to pension claims for Belgians who worked in Germany.

Captured German records offer a wealth of information regarding German labour policies in occupied territories. The Marburg Collection is the largest document collection relating to German labour policies in occupied Belgium. Eggert Reeder, head of the administrative staff of the Military Governor of Belgium and northern France under General Baron Alexander von Falkenhausen, ordered the transfer of the documents to Marburg, where they later fell into the hands of the French authorities and were deposited at the French National Archives. Copies of documents pertaining to Belgium are held at the SVG/DO.[100] The collection contains

[99] Patrick Nefors has produced a 497 page inventory of the records held at the SVG/DO, Patrick Nefors, *Inventaris van het archief van de Bestuursafdeling voor Oorlogsslachtoffers van het Ministerie van Volksgezondheid en Leefmilieu* (Brussel/Bruxelles CEGES/SOMA, 1997).
[100] SVG/DO, R.184/Tr.33.462.

a large part of the files of Military Administration Group VII – Welfare and Labour Deployment, dating from 1941–1944 and covers a diverse range of topics, including restrictions on welfare benefits for part-time workers, recruitment for the armaments industry in Belgium, labour conscription, contract breakers, and the records of Belgian workers who died in Germany. Reeder's Activity Reports (*Tätigkeitsberichte*) are another source of information about the Military Administration and its policies in Belgium.[101] Finally, the reports of the representative of the German Security Service and Security Police in Belgium are a valuable source of information on Belgian popular opinion and the reaction to the introduction of a compulsory labour draft.[102] In Germany, the records relating to the German Labour Front (DAF) are held at the German Federal Archive.[103] The North-Rhine Westphalia State Archive Düsseldorf (HStAD) holds 70,000 *Gestapo* files from the Düsseldorf regional headquarters – one of the few places in Germany where these records survived the war.[104] The Berlin State Archive (LAB) holds judicial and police case files and police log books, offering key records on law and order in wartime Berlin. The vast holdings of the Red Cross International Tracing Service (ITS) in Bad Arolsen, which opened to researchers only in recent years, provide invaluable resources on all aspects of the *Ausländereinsatz* across Germany.

In terms of the methodological ordering of this research, the chapters of this thesis will move from an overview of labour policy and recruitment in occupied Belgium and deployment of Belgian workers in Germany to specific case studies of the cities of Berlin and Düsseldorf. Chapter One introduces the reader to Belgium under the Military Administration and provides a detailed study of labour policy and recruitment in occupied Belgium, utilising the records of the Military Administration, as well as the accounts of Belgian workers. Chapter Two provides an overview of living conditions in Germany, drawing upon the accounts of Belgians.

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[101] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Militärverwaltung beim Militärbefehlshaber Belgien und Nordfrankreich, Tätigkeitsberichte.* These records were seized by the United States Military and are held at the US National Archives Collection of Foreign Records Seized (Record Group 242). Hereafter referred to as "*Tätigkeitsbericht*".

[102] CEGES/SOMA, AA553, *Der Beauftragter des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des Sicherheitsdienst für den Bereich des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich, Brüssel. Meldungen aus Belgien und Nordfrankreich, 1943-1944* (hereafter *SP/SD Meldungen aus Belgien und Nordfrankreich*).

[103] Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde, NS 5 I/vorl.270, fol.1.

[104] *Gestapo* case files survive for Düsseldorf, Würzburg, Speyer and Zichenau.

Chapter Three examines working conditions. Utilising records relating to the placement and earnings of Belgians deployed in Germany, this chapter considers the question of what types of jobs Belgians undertook and the extent to which Belgians were employed in skilled jobs. The accounts of Belgians deployed across Germany are also used to illustrate their experiences in the workplace. Chapter Four consists of a case study of the experiences of Belgians deployed in Germany's capital Berlin, a heavily industrialised city that was dominated by the armaments industry. Chapter Five provides a case study of the smaller industrialised Rhine-Ruhr city of Düsseldorf. Residence lists have been utilised to provide a demographic profile of the Belgians deployed in the two cities.[105] The files of Belgium's Service for the Victims of the War have been used extensively to form a picture of the wartime employment patterns of Belgians who were deployed in Germany. Health and judicial records have been used to study the treatment of Flemings and Walloons and whether these two groups were treated differently, as well as how their treatment compared with the experiences of their counterparts from the Soviet Union. First-hand accounts from Belgians who worked in Berlin and *Wehrmacht* mood reports from the final months of the war have been used extensively to gauge relations between Belgians and ordinary Germans, while *Gestapo* case files offer perspectives on relations between Germans and Belgians in Düsseldorf and everyday terror during the Nazi era.

[105] Residence lists have also been used to randomly sample individual files.

CHAPTER ONE:
German Labour Policy and Recruitment in Occupied Belgium

With a population of 8.39 million inhabitants shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, Belgium was the most densely populated country in Europe.[1] It was the first country in continental Europe to experience the industrial revolution. After Britain, Belgium was the most highly industrialised country in Europe, with 48.9 percent of the workforce employed in industry and mining in 1930.[2] Belgium's main industries were metal production, coalmining, chemical and machinery production and textiles. Liège and Namur were coalmining and manufacturing centres, while Antwerp was Europe's largest port and Ghent was a manufacturing city. However, industry was distributed unevenly across Belgium. Belgium's Dutch-speaking regions to the north and west were mostly agricultural, with the notable exceptions of the industrialised cities of Antwerp and Ghent, while industry was concentrated in the francophone regions of Liège, Namur and Hainaut in Belgium's south and east. Belgium's economic wealth was also distributed unevenly. The capital Brussels and Walloon regions to the south and east enjoyed greater economic prosperity, while Flanders tended to be poorer and more economically backward. In 1930, 42.92 percent of the population spoke Flemish, while 37.56 percent spoke French, and a further 12.92 percent were bilingual. [3] In addition, there was also a small German speaking community in territories of Eupen, Malmédy and Saint Vith which had been annexed to Belgium under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. The German speaking community represented 0.23 percent of the German population in the 1920s[4] The divisions between Flemings and Walloons were exacerbated by the First World War. Through the drafting of large numbers of Flemish soldiers into the Belgian armed forces, to serve under officers who usually only spoke French, the Flemish people came face to face with the Flemish-French duality. The schism in Belgian society widened as Flemings became more conscious of the social and

[1] Warmbrunn, *The German occupation of Belgium*, 5.
[2] Ibid., 6.
[3] Ibid., 25.
[4] *Meyers Lexikon*, 7th ed., s.v. "Belgien".

economic discrimination they faced in Belgian society. The German occupiers sought to divide Belgian society by encouraging Flemish separatism. In the wake of the First World War Flemish nationalism began to acquire a political character.[5] Martin Conway emphasises that the "diverse populations of Belgium possessed little natural homogeneity". Belgium was characterised by the ethnic, division between the francophone Walloons of the southern provinces of the country and the Dutch-speaking populations of Flanders, as well as long-standing commercial and political rivalries between the different cities of Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, Brussels and Liège and stark social divisions between the working class and the predominantly francophone bourgeoisie.[6] In a nation characterised by its divisions, religion was a unifying force. Over 90 percent of Belgium's population identified itself as Catholic. Accordingly, the Catholic Church played an influential role in Belgian society and became a key voice of dissent during the Second World War.

The trade unions were also an influential force in Belgian politics. Belgium's trade union movement was dominated by Socialist, Catholic and Liberal organisations. Established in the late nineteenth century in Walloon industrial areas, Brussels, and urban areas of Flanders, the Socialist trade union movement was the largest in Belgium with a membership of 582,000 in 1938, while the Catholic trade unions had a membership of 326,000.[7] General strikes had been a key feature of social, political and economic life in Belgium from 1893 onwards when workers held a general strike demanding universal suffrage. A number of general strikes were held throughout the early twentieth century, with workers demanding better wages and working conditions, changes to the voting system and the right to collective bargaining. Many of the general strikes centred around industrial cities with the largest concentrations of workers, such as Liège, Namur and Charleroi in Wallonia and Ghent and Antwerp in Flanders.

1. Belgium under Military Administration

Following the German invasion of Belgium on 10 May 1940, the Pierlot government passed its authority to the cabinet of Secretaries–General. The government moved to

[5] Warmbrunn, *The German occupation of Belgium*, 25.
[6] Martin Conway, *Collaboration in Belgium: Léon Degrelle and the Rexist movement, 1940-1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 6.
[7] Val R Lorwin, "Labour Unions and Political Parties in Belgium," *Industrial & Labour Relations Review* 28, no. 2 (1975): 250.

France and a minority of ministers subsequently moved to London in the autumn of 1940. In one of its final acts, the Belgian Parliament charged the Secretaries–General with the responsibility of protecting the civilian population and ensuring that Belgian law and the Hague Convention were observed. These principles were codified in the protocol signed by the cabinet of Secretaries–General and the Military Administration on 12 June 1940. The Secretaries–General were professional bureaucrats and were responsible for overseeing all ministries on behalf of Belgium's King Leopold III. In contrast to the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg and Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, who fled with their governments after the German invasion, King Leopold III chose to remain with his people possibly with the hope of continuing to play a political role. In a deal brokered in the weeks following Belgium's surrender on 28 May 1940, Belgium was governed by a Military Administration that ruled in conjunction with the Secretaries–General and the King, retaining its monarchy and civil administration. However, two key territorial and administrative changes took place. Belgium's borders were redrawn, with Belgium ceding the predominantly German-speaking region of Eupen-Malmédy, which was annexed to the Reich. The north-eastern French departments of Nord and Pas-de-Calais were administered as French territories by the German Military Administration in Brussels. Richard Cobb emphasises that there was a degree of continuity in German policy during the Second World War, with the Germans annexing these north eastern departments of France to Belgium in both wars. Cobb observes, however, that Belgians were treated much better than the French.[8] A Military Administration was established under the command of von Falkenhausen.[9] The Belgian authorities were allowed to exist alongside the Military Administration, with most Belgian bureaucrats, the police and chiefs of industry remaining at their posts. Top civil servants and chiefs of industry assented to German hegemony and declared their resolve to collaborate with the occupier as long as this would be in the interests of the Belgian people – a kind of loyal collaboration. This pattern of rule contrasts with German rule in other occupied countries. The Netherlands was placed under a "civilian" administration headed by Reich Commissioner Arthur Seyss-Inquart. Luxembourg, by contrast, was annexed to the Reich. Luxembourg becoming

[8] Richard Cobb, *French and Germans, Germans and French: a personal interpretation of France under two occupations, 1914-1918/1940-1944* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1983), 41-2.
[9] Von Falkenhausen was arrested by the *Gestapo* in the aftermath of the attempted assassination of Hitler on 20 July 1944, and was held at the Dachau concentration camp until the camp's liberation.

part of *Gau* Koblenz-Trier; *Gauleiter* Gustav Simon headed Luxembourg's civilian administration. *Gau* Koblenz-Trier became became *Gau* Moselland in 1942. Contested territory, Alsace was similarly annexed to *Gau* Baden, while Lorraine was attached to *Gau* Saarpfalz (from 1942 *Gau* Westmark). The military and civilian administrations remained in place in western Europe until 13 July 1944, when Hitler placed Belgium and northern France under the authority of Josef Grohé, *Gauleiter* of Cologne-Aachen.[10]

The legacy of the First World War influenced the Belgian population's reaction to the German invasion. The invasion of Belgium created genuine panic amongst Belgian civilians. The crimes committed by German soldiers in Belgium and France during the opening weeks of the Second World War – the shooting and bayoneting and confinement of civilians to buildings that were then set alight, the pillaging and razing of villages – left approximately 6,500 victims, including seven babies in Les Rivages.[11] Underlying these crimes was the German army's belief that its progress was being sabotaged by partisans (*francs-tireurs*) and wounded German soldiers were being mutilated by innocent-looking maidens and children. An estimated 1.5 to 2.2 million Belgians fled west and south into France in the aftermath of the invasion.[12] The second painful legacy of Germany's World War One occupation was the deportation of approximately 60,000 Belgians to Germany between 26 October 1916 and 10 February 1917, of whom 1,250 or 1.82 percent perished.[13] The memory of the deportations was still vivid and had the effect that Belgian business was inclined to cooperate with the Military Administration in the hope of keeping workers in Belgium.

The German occupying forces ordered Belgians to resume economic activity in the first days of the occupation. This call to resume economic activity met a favourable response in business, industrial and financial circles, as well as amongst

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[10] Peter Hüttenberger, *Die Gauleiter: Studie zum Wandel des Machtgefüges in der NSDAP* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanst., 1969), 147-49, 99-200, 14, 22.

[11] Margaret Lavinia Anderson, "A German Way of War?," *German History* 22, no. 2 (2004): 254. John Horne and Alan Kramer have published a key study of German World War One atrocities: John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914. A History of Denial* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2001).; and Alan Kramer, "The Burning of Louvain: Louvain and the Atrocities of 1914," in *Dynamic of destruction: culture and mass killing in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[12] Warmbrunn, *The German occupation of Belgium*, 46.

[13] Jens Thiel, "Belgische Arbeitskräfte für die deutsche Kriegswirtschaft. Deportation, Zwangsarbeit und Anwerbung im Ersten Weltkrieg" (Dissertation zur Erlangung der Promotion, Humboldt-Universität, 2003), 60.

the wider population. Potargent emphasised that one wished to safeguard national interests during the course of an occupation one feared would be long.[14] Many Belgians believed that Germany would win the war and that it would be in their best interests to adopt a policy of accommodation with the occupiers in order to safeguard the Belgian economy and food supply.[15] This accommodation with the German military occupier was justified as necessary politics of presence, a politics of "lesser evil".[16] For its part, the Military Administration encouraged the spirit of cooperation in order to maintain peace and order in occupied Belgium and secure the maximum participation of Belgium in the German war economy. From the outset of the occupation a policy of *Realpolitik* was adopted on both sides.

The approach adopted by the Military Administration was not improvised, but rather was based on a set of directives developed by Reeder between November 1939 and May 1940. Prussian bureaucrat turned military administrator, Reeder held responsibility for civilian matters in occupied Belgium. His directives were designed to protect the interests of the *Wehrmacht* and the security of the troops, as well as reinforcing Germany's war economy by harnessing the Belgian economy, and, more specifically, the Belgian labour force. The German authorities did not wish to become mired in the administration of Belgium and sought to limit the burden as much as possible in terms of both fiscal cost and manpower. Reeder foresaw the role of the Military Administration as that of an overseer:

> The organisation and working methods of the Military Administration are to operate on the principle that, in spite of its name, the [Military Administration] administers as little as possible, instead acting as an overseer predominantly governing, guiding and advising.[17]

On 5 June 1940 German officials and the Belgian Secretaries–General began negotiations to draw up a set of protocols and by the end of July 1940 they arrived at a modus vivendi. The protocols agreed by the Military Administration and the Belgian authorities meant that responsibility for administration remained in Belgian hands, although the Germans were in control.

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[14] Potargent, *La mise au travail de la main-d'oeuvre belge*, 9.

[15] It was essential for Belgium to keep industry running, as Belgium was only able to produce roughly 50 percent of its own needs in terms of foodstuffs and was therefore dependent on trade to fulfil domestic need.

[16] In Flemish politics of "*minste kwaf*".

[17] Reeder quoted in Haupt, "Der 'Arbeitseinsatz' der belgischen Bevölkerung", 12.

2. The Organisation of labour in occupied Belgium

The framework of labour administration was established in the first year of the occupation and this structure remained in place until Belgium's liberation on 3 September 1944.[18] The Military Administration was divided into two key divisions: the Administration Division and the Economic Division. Overall responsibility for labour direction came under the auspices of Group VII in the Economic Division, headed by Dr August Schultze. Group VII supervised recruitment offices (*Werbestellen*), which were run by Reich Labour Ministry (RAM) staff and Belgian employees. At its peak the labour administration had a staff of 4,000 officials employed outside Germany – 400 of whom were employed in Belgium and the Netherlands.[19] Recruitment offices were attached to military field headquarters (*Oberfeldkommandanturen* and *Feldkommandanturen)* or OFKs/FKs, although in practice recruitment office staff rarely consulted with the military command. The key areas of responsibility within recruitment offices included labour deployment within Belgium and the Reich, welfare provision for the unemployed, wage policy, social security, the representation of the DAF in Belgium, medical service, matters relating to personnel and administration and recruitment for the mining industry (for a list of recruitment offices see Appendix 1 on page 286).

Approaches to the recruitment of Belgian labour differed within the Military Administration. Von Falkenhausen preferred to adopt a less demanding approach in order to keep the Secretaries–General and Belgian population on side, whereas Schultze wished to push as hard as possible from the outset. The German occupation evoked bitter memories of the deportation of Belgians to Germany and France during the First World War. Von Falkenhausen was acutely aware of the resentment that the conscription of Belgian labour for deployment to the Reich would elicit and worked against the imposition of a labour draft.[20] However, the appointment of Sauckel in March 1942 brought a shift in the balance of power within the Military Administration. Germany faced ever-increasing manpower demands in the months following the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. A Führer Order issued on 30 September 1942 granted Sauckel broad powers with respect to the recruitment of

[18] Most of Belgium was liberated by 3 September 1944; however, some south-east border regions were not liberated until the Ardennes-Offensive in December 1944.
[19] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 37.
[20] Etienne Verhoeyen, *La Belgique occupée. De l'an 40 à la Libération, 1994*, trans. Serge Govaert (Bruxelles: De Boeck-Wesmael, 1994), 261.

labour both in Germany and the occupied territories, a task Sauckel pursued with great rigour. Sauckel's new powers allowed him to take all measures he deemed necessary for the recruitment and deployment of labour and to issue directives to military and civil governments in the occupied territories. Schultze and Group VII gained an increasing degree of independence from Reeder over time – especially from 1942 when Schultze was appointed as Sauckel's representative in Belgium.[21] From October 1942 Schultze could determine labour policy against the will of the Military Administration, and Group VII therefore began to operate more independently. This shift in the balance of power had a direct impact on labour policy and allowed Sauckel and Schultze to prevail over those in the Military Administration who favoured a less demanding approach.

Charles Verwilghen, Secretary–General for the Department of Labour and Social Welfare, held overall responsibility for labour within the Belgian administration. In his first meeting with Verwilghen, the head of the Administration Division, Harry von Craushaar, made it clear that the Military Administration would brook no opposition from the Belgian authorities. Von Craushaar warned Verwilghen that the German authorities would not hesitate to take control of labour management if the efforts of the Belgian authorities were found to be lacking.[22] Von Craushaar and Verwilghen reached a compromise in July 1940: recruitment of Belgian workers for deployment to Germany would proceed on a voluntary basis and Belgian workers would not be employed directly in the war industries. German interventions in the labour market and the threat of forced labour in Germany forced the Secretaries–General to declare their agreement with deployment of Belgian voluntary workers in Belgium and Germany at a meeting on 3 September 1940.

The National Office for Labour Deployment and Unemployment (ONPC) was established in Belgium under a royal decree in June 1935. In June 1940 the office was ordered to resume its activities under the new appellation the National Office for Labour Deployment and Inspection. The ONPC was subsequently renamed the National Employment Office (ONT) in April 1941. To avoid confusion the abbreviation ONT will be used hereafter in reference to the Belgian labour offices. In the months following the start of the occupation, the Belgian labour

[21] Warmbrunn, *The German occupation of Belgium*, 225-6.
[22] Mark van den Wijngaert, "De Secretarissen-generaal tegenover de verplichte Tewerkstelling (1940-1944)," *Bijdragen tot de Geschiednis van de Tweede Wereldoorlog* 1, no. augustus (1970): 8.

offices were allowed to drift with no firm course or precise directives. ONT offices were required to carry out the instructions of local German authorities and thus the German authorities were able to circumvent the central Belgian authorities. Certain OFKs/FKs took advantage of this situation in order to give orders directly to labour offices.[23] This situation came to a head in November 1940 with the appointment of Fritz Jan Hendriks as the director of the ONT. Hendriks was pro-German and willingly collaborated with the German authorities over the heads of his superiors and the Secretaries–General. While Hendriks was officially subordinated to the Secretary–General for the Department of Labour and Social Welfare, he gained increasing independence from his superiors. Hendriks collaborated with the German authorities with virtual impunity, as his German counterparts protected him from attempts by his superiors to remove him from his office. Through the assistance of Hendriks, the recruitment offices were able to strengthen their control over the Belgian labour offices to the point that "the ONT became virtually the executive branch of the German administration with respect to compulsory placement in Belgium, and a subordinate but cooperative partner in the administration of compulsory labour in Germany".[24] The ONT represented one of the few remaining avenues for the Belgian authorities to circumvent the German authorities' efforts to transfer Belgian workers to Germany; however, under Hendriks' direction the ONT had little efficacy.

3. Labour policy in the aftermath of defeat

Following Belgium's capitulation, the German authorities were faced with the urgent problem of Belgium's army of unemployed. With the demobilisation of the Belgian army and the return of refugees and POWs, the ranks of Belgium's unemployed swelled to an estimated 500,000.[25] Moreover, the commission sent by the RAM believed that the level of unemployment was actually much higher.[26] These figures give an impression of the scale of the difficulties Belgium experienced in the immediate aftermath of defeat.

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[23] Potargent, *La mise au travail de la main-d'oeuvre belge*, 13.
[24] Warmbrunn, *The German occupation of Belgium*, 226.
[25] Selleslagh, ed., *L'Emploi de la Main D'Oeuvre Belge sous L'Occupation 1940*, 8. Joachim von Ribbentrop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, later suggested that there were 600,000 unemployed in Belgium in the summer of 1940. Quoted in Warmbrunn, *The German occupation of Belgium*, 226.
[26] These figures are based on the unemployed who were claiming public assistance, and therefore did not include those who had not taken the step of registering as unemployed.

Before the war the Belgian state did not provide financial assistance to the unemployed and only 3.4 million Belgians held unemployment and health insurance.[27] Following the German invasion, the Military Administration faced the problem of financial support for Belgium's unemployed workers. To combat this crisis, the Reich Credit Bank (*Reichskreditkasse*) placed provisional funds at the disposal of the Public Assistance Commission (CAP). Additionally, the Office for Labour Deployment and Unemployment was re-established and charged with responsibility for overseeing the provision of unemployment benefits by the CAP. The German policy regarding unemployment benefits was based on the principle that entitlement would be determined on the basis of need, taking into account the earnings of all members of a household, as well any other financial resources members of the household had at their disposal. The Military Administration delegated responsibility for overseeing the provision of financial support for the unemployed to the Belgian authorities, obliging officials to enforce German unemployment polices. Welfare support for the unemployed was a key lever used by the German authorities to pressurise Belgian workers to accept work in Germany.

Apart from taking steps to ameliorate the dire financial situation of Belgium's unemployed, the Belgian authorities also instituted a public works program aimed at the reconstruction of roads and buildings. Upon the insistence of the Military Administration, the mayors of communes were required to engage unemployed workers for two full days or four half days per week. The work undertaken by the unemployed as part of the public works program included clearing roads, forests and heath land, dredging watercourses, draining swamps and urgent agricultural work. During the first two years of the occupation, the Military Administration introduced several measures to ensure that Belgians fulfilled their responsibility to work.

The resumption of business quickly helped to ease the problem of unemployment. The number of unemployed dropped from almost 500,000 in July 1940 to around 100,000 in June 1941 (see Table 1 on page 40). The German war industry and allied industries provided a significant impetus in driving down unemployment. By the start of 1942 some 190,000 Belgians were employed by the *Wehrmacht* or military construction projects in either Belgium or the annexed French

[27] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.9, 96.

departments.[28] However, the reduction in unemployment limited the pool of potential candidates who could be recruited for deployment in Germany.

Table 1: Belgian Unemployment Figures 1938–1942

	1938	*1939*	*1940*	*1941*	*1942*
January	357,514	408,312	358,759	207,785	85,994
February	339,960	348,849	324,467	193,495	85,827
March	286,942	318,821	255,288	165,855	
April	275,903	305,933	210,000	144,168	
May	308,498	331,397	N/A	N/A	
June	288,244	302,461	387,931	99,328	
July	287,962	324,353	493,700	N/A	
August	297,013	339,950	462,140	75,590	
September	302,808	361,456	413,870	N/A	
October	323,925	320,690	323,012	53,977	
November	326,920	312,110	249,261	55,036+	
December	432,392	328,308	219,556	59,828	

Source: Figures extracted from Reeder's monthly Activity Reports.

4. Voluntary labour assignments in Germany

The drafting of labour was a key aspect of the German exploitation of the Belgian economy. In accordance with the mutual agreement between the Belgian and German authorities in June 1940: i) workers would be free to accept or refuse work in Germany; ii) such refusal would not lead to the withdrawal of unemployment or welfare payments; iii) Belgians deployed in Germany would not be required to work in armaments or munitions factories; and iv) Belgian workers would receive the same welfare and social benefits as German workers. The German authorities initially abided by the terms of this agreement; however, the principles of the agreement soon fell by the wayside as difficulties with the recruitment campaign mounted.

Labour policy mirrored the broader pragmatic approach of the Military Administration and Secretaries–General in the early years of the occupation. Warmbrunn notes:

> Threats of deportation of smaller groups of skilled workers continued to crop up during the early years of the occupation, usually at the instigation of Reich authorities, but the Military Administration, mindful of the antagonism

[28] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 61-2.

> created by the First World War labour draft, emphatically preferred to rely on voluntary recruitment. The same memory of wartime deportations also inclined the Belgian administration at first toward cooperation with the Germans.[29]

This tension between soliciting the cooperation of Belgian authorities and fulfilling the labour demands of German industry underpinned the campaign to recruit voluntary workers. Belgian employment authorities retained responsibility for labour within Belgium and the Military Administration was responsible for the recruitment of workers for deployment in Germany; however, a series of decrees directed at Belgian employment offices in the weeks following the invasion meant that Belgian employment offices were co-opted for the task of recruiting workers for deployment in Germany. Belgian labour officials were ordered to post German announcements, provide information and advice about work in Germany and provide assistance with recruitment by notifying unemployed workers offers of employment in Germany as required. Over time Belgian labour officials were drawn into even greater collaboration with the Military Administration.

The first demands for labour came in June 1940 when an envoy from the RAM visited Belgium to assess the workforce and levels of unemployment. In July 1940 the German authorities commenced a campaign targeted at recruiting skilled and semi-skilled metalworkers, shipbuilders, miners, and construction, timber, textile and agricultural workers to cover immediate shortfalls within Germany's labour market. Private companies also started recruiting workers directly in Belgium. When skilled workers became increasingly scarce, German officials recruited unskilled workers and workers for retraining who were then sent to training centres (*Umschulungswerkstätte*) established in Belgium by German companies. Workers employed in industries with high levels of unemployment or less critical for the war effort were conscripted for retraining.

The first of these training centres was established by aeroplane manufacturer Junkers Flugzeug- und Motorenwerke GmbH in February 1941 in Herstal, Ghent and Mechelen, where workers undertook an eight-week training program with the expectation that they would commence employment in Junkers' Dessau factory after completing their training. By 31 December 1942, 4,210 Belgians had departed for

[29] Warmbrunn, *The German occupation of Belgium*, 227.

Dessau after completing training.[30] Other German firms followed suit and training centres were established across Belgium by companies including shipbuilding company Deutsche Werft AG, chemicals manufacturer IG Farben AG, Allgemeine Elektrizitäts Gesellschaft (AEG) Berlin, auto manufacturer Ford-Werke AG and Erla Maschinenwerke GmbH. Following the introduction of compulsory labour assignments in Belgium on 6 March 1942, the Military Administration extended the existing training centres and established new training centres. Workers were conscripted for training in the hope that they would volunteer to work in Germany after training in Belgium.[31] While Reeder suggested that initial results of the scheme were good, according to official statistics, by 31 December 1942 a total of just 5,574 workers had taken up employment in Germany after training. Haupt argues that the number of workers who took up work in Germany after completing training in Belgium was low, concluding that the expense of training Belgians could hardly be justified considering that not all trainees took up work in Germany.[32] Following the introduction of the compulsory labour draft the number of workers undertaking voluntary training at training centres dwindled as workers feared that they would be conscripted for employment in Germany upon completion of their training. After the introduction of compulsory labour assignments in Germany some workers were conscripted for training before they were sent to Germany. One worker recalled: "We were designated for retraining at Junkers in Herstal at the beginning of March 1943... We made up a substantial number from the municipality of Montegnée called up on the same date".[33] After completing their training the conscripts were transported to Junkers in Dessau. Textile worker Pauline D was conscripted for retraining at the Junkers training centre in Ghent on 23 October 1942 and subsequently commenced work at Junkers in Dessau on 20 November 1942.[34] Trainees generally completed between four to thirteen weeks' training and then departed for Germany.

German recruiters promised volunteers wages ranging from 0.57RM (*Reichsmark*) per hour in rural areas to 1RM in large cities, with the average wage ranging from 0.70 to 0.85RM, and some industries, such as construction, paid

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[30] Haupt, "Der 'Arbeitseinsatz' der belgischen Bevölkerung", 204.
[31] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.21, D13.
[32] Haupt, "Der 'Arbeitseinsatz' der belgischen Bevölkerung", 204-5.
[33] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Pierre C.
[34] SVG/DO, Pauline D, D368118.

western Europeans per diem allowances of 1–1.50RM for family upkeep. Workers were allowed to send home up to 250RM per month if married and 150RM if unmarried. Western Europeans were also promised leave every three months if married and every six months if unmarried. Additionally, the western Europeans were promised working conditions, food rations, fringe benefits (marriage and child loans excepted) and housing similar to those of the German worker.[35] Many volunteers went to Germany with high expectations of good wages and living conditions. However, Reeder noted significant shortcomings in his monthly report of 13 August 1940. In some cases workers did not receive the wages promised and were forced to tolerate a lower standard of living. In one case Flemish volunteers were given only 15RM for four days work. In another case, workers who were told they would receive 69RM per week received only 59RM. Workers' food provisions were inadequate in view of the eleven-hour day they were required to work and some Belgians were forced to lodge with Poles, Czechs and other nationalities. Restrictions on movement were another cause for complaint. News of the false promises given by recruiters and poor living conditions soon began to filter back to Belgium. In November 1940 a report by the RAM appraising the foreign labour program observed that false promises given to workers, especially Dutch and Belgians, were causing difficulties in further recruitment in these countries.[36] The RAM subsequently issued guidelines for the recruitment of workers in the occupied territories, banning certain recruitment practices.

The Military Administration made key interventions in the Belgian economy intended to keep inflation under control and make employment in Germany more financially attractive. Wages were frozen in Belgium, enhancing the appeal of working in Germany, where workers were promised higher wages. From July 1940, the Military Administration devalued the Belgian franc (bfrs) by 25 percent, increasing the value of the *Reichsmark* from 10bfrs to 12.5bfrs[37] Belgians who accepted labour assignments in Germany were paid in *Reichsmark* and thus working in Germany brought significant financial benefits. The Germans also removed many consumer goods from the market through extensive governmental purchases, and by artificially changing the discount rate to favour the *Reichsmark* over the local

[35] Homze, *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany*, 51-2.
[36] Ibid., 53.
[37] Verhoeyen, *La Belgique occupée*, 262.

currency. Inevitably, remaining consumer goods flowed into the black market. Thus the average worker, whose wage was fixed, had limited capacity to buy goods.[38] These measures limited both the earning and purchasing power of workers who remained in Belgium, lowering real wages. Peter Scholliers has completed a detailed reconstruction of the standard of living of workers during the war. His mixed price index (official and black-market prices) has shown that at the end of 1943 purchasing power was only 15 percent of the pre-war levels.[39] These economic interventions had the effect of making the situation of Belgian workers who remained at home markedly tougher, thereby increasing the appeal of work in Germany.

The success of the Military Administration and Belgian authorities in combating unemployment proved to be a hindrance to the recruitment of Belgian workers, as many workers were hopeful of finding work in Belgium and were less inclined to accept work outside Belgium. The key obstacles to the recruitment and retention of Belgian workers, according to Reeder, were the lack of enthusiasm among Belgian workers to accept work in Germany, the breaking of contracts and the lack of cooperation amongst the Secretaries–General and the directors of some ONT offices. These problems were further exacerbated by the inordinate delays to wage transfers to workers' families in Belgium and bombing in Germany. Reeder also suggested that a lively whispering campaign and British radio were also taking a toll on recruitment.[40] The invasion of the Soviet Union (USSR) on 22 June 1941 also affected the recruitment drive.

The German authorities began to use the laws in relation to the provision of financial assistance for the unemployed to increase pressure on Belgian workers. The Decree on the Provision of Financial Aid to People in Need, published by the Secretaries–General on 29 June 1940, stipulated that welfare recipients who refused to accept a job offer without a legitimate reason would be excluded from public assistance for one month. Welfare payments could also be suspended if a worker resigned or was dismissed from their job. In cases of repeated resignations or refusals to accept employment, welfare benefits could be suspended for two months or

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[38] Homze, *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany*, 50.
[39] Peter Scholliers, "L'appauvrissement organisé: les prix, les salaires et le pouvoir d'achat sous l'occupation" in *1940-1945: la vie quotidienne en Belgique*, ed. R Coolen (Exhibition Catalogue: Bruxelles, Galerie CGER, 21 décembre 1984 - 3 mars 1985) (Bruxelles: Galerie CGER, 1984).
[40] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, Nr.9, 91-2.

indefinitely.[41] Belgian labour offices were obliged to enforce this policy and from August 1940 Schultze also sought to apply section 26 of the decree to workers who refused to take up employment in Germany. Some ONT offices, for example the Antwerp labour office, did not hesitate to apply section 26 to workers who refused to work in Germany. In May 1942 the Military Administration prohibited the payment of financial support to persons unwilling to accept labour assignments and persons out of work or employed on a part-time basis altogether. The Secretaries–General refused to comply. However, the German authorities bypassed the Belgian central administration, instructing ONT offices to carry out the order. Most ONT officials complied, with a few notable exceptions resigning in the wake of the decree. The precise reason why ONT staff complied is unclear. Some officials held a genuine conviction that it was in the best interests of workers to accept work in Germany and approved of the measures. One notable example is the director of the Tournai ONT office who stated: "If one can resolve in a favourable manner the wishes of those concerning the provision of bread and meat and the transfer of regular earnings, I am of the opinion that encouraging workers to go to Germany to work constitutes a social duty".[42] Other officials probably complied out of fear of the consequences of refusing to cooperate. Whatever their reasons, many ONT officials collaborated actively with the German authorities, breaking the terms of the agreement in relation to voluntary employment in Germany. The cooperation of ONT officials, and the great zeal with which some ONT staff enforced German orders, indicates that many Belgians were pressured to accept work in Germany. Some unemployed workers were therefore forced to make a choice between their family's livelihood and refusing to work in Germany. The increasingly coercive methods employed by the Military Administration in conjunction with the ONT illustrates that Belgians who departed for Germany rarely fall into black and white categories. From as early as 1941 the line between "voluntary" and "compulsory" labour became blurred.

Belgian volunteers were initially engaged on fixed-term contracts – usually six months to a year in duration. Much to the annoyance of German employers and Labour Offices, many western Europeans refused to extend their contracts and returned home. In order to prevent western European workers from returning home,

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[41] Decree published in Selleslagh, ed., *L'Emploi de la Main D'Oeuvre Belge sous L'Occupation 1940*, 38-51.
[42] Verhoeyen, *La Belgique occupée*, 263.

many firms began to collude with Labour Offices and contrived to have legislation applicable to German workers with respect to restrictions on changing employers applied to foreigners.[43] Workers who had initially signed fixed-term contacts were often prevented from returning home when their contacts expired. Thus a foreign worker's employment status could in effect change from voluntary to forced. Industry subsequently successfully petitioned Nazi officials and Hitler ordered an end to fixed-term contracts.[44] Open-ended contracts were used from early 1941.

The Military Administration implemented measures to compel unemployed workers to accept jobs in Germany. In 1941 special public works were set up to occupy unemployed workers. In order to make employment in Germany more appealing, the work assigned to unemployed workers was intended to cause great hardship. ONT offices sent job applicants to German recruitment offices for registration and additional information about work available in Germany from March to October 1942. The persons concerned were told that they would not be forced to work in Germany, but the names of individuals who refused to report to the recruitment office were sent to German authorities by the ONT. They were classified as "asocial" and became the subjects of forced placement in re-education camps. The notion that people had a social obligation to undertake productive work was a key tenet in Nazi thinking and those who refused to accept work were considered to be "asocial". Again, conditions in these camps were deliberately made unpleasant to encourage inmates to accept work in Germany.[45] By 1942 the tactics used by the Military Administration to "convince" Belgians to accept work in Germany became more coercive. While the Germans promised not to place workers under duress to sign employment contracts for work in Germany, some Belgians "volunteered" under immense pressure from recruitment officials.

Belgian civilians constituted the largest single group of workers from western Europe in Germany by September 1941.[46] At the outbreak of hostilities between Germany and the USSR 189,000 Belgians were working in Germany.[47] Despite the initial success of the recruitment program in Belgium, the limits of what can be

[43] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 194.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Warmbrunn, *The German occupation of Belgium*, 230.
[46] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 98.
[47] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 60.

considered genuinely voluntary recruitment were reached in the summer of 1941.[48] This was at the very time when Germany's labour resources were being stretched to their limit. By late 1941 there were half a million vacancies in agriculture, 50,000 in mining, 300,000 in the metals industry and 140,000 in construction.[49] With hopes of a *Blitzkrieg* in the USSR and the return of German soldiers dashed, the recruitment of large numbers of foreign workers was essential for the German war economy to function. In December 1941 Reeder foreshadowed the mounting difficulties the Military Administration would encounter in the months to come, reporting concerns about the exhaustion of the pool of available workers in Belgium: "The source for recruitment, which has been fertile until now, of course, has its natural and economic limits".[50] Potargent emphasises that "the measures implemented could no longer satisfy the occupier's insatiable demands. The setbacks the Germans experienced increased day by day".[51]

Nevertheless, Reeder warned against the adoption of coercive recruitment measures in September 1941: "Experience has clearly shown that greater successes can only be achieved under the precondition of absolutely voluntary [recruitment] and trust in assurances that Germany has [previously] given".[52] However, in view of Germany's growing manpower needs, the Military Administration's reluctance to introduce a compulsory labour draft was viewed with growing impatience. Despite his opposition to the introduction of a compulsory labour draft for Germany and scepticism about the success that this measure would bring, Reeder conceded defeat in his Activity Report for the period September to December 1942: "The measures were essential after a significant improvement in voluntary recruitment had not been achieved".[53] At a time when Germany's manpower needs grew rapidly, the number of workers volunteering to work in Germany began to drop and the Military Administration was forced to consider other methods of recruitment.

Dr Werner Mansfeld, Chief of Labour Allocation under Göring's Office of the Four Year Plan 1933-1942, issued guidelines to the offices in the occupied territories in early 1942. He advised that the aim was still voluntary recruitment, but in order to achieve a satisfactory result, the German authorities would "have to be

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[48] Warmbrunn, *The German occupation of Belgium*, 228.
[49] Herbert, "Labour as spoils of conquest," 222.
[50] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Allgemeine Übersicht für die Zeit 1.12.1941–15.3.1942*, 16.
[51] Potargent, *La mise au travail de la main-d'oeuvre belge*, 56.
[52] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.17, A11.
[53] Ibid., *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.22, D12.

able to order, with all requisite vigour, those measures necessary to bolster voluntary recruitment of workers for deployment in Germany".[54] While the German authorities had initially employed a carrot and stick approach to the recruitment of Belgian labour, the authorities began to rely more on coercive measures to achieve their goals.

Table 2: Belgian workers with contracts and Belgian workers in Germany

Date	*With labour contracts*	*In Germany*
7 December 1940	90,423	
18 January 1941	100,000	
25 April 1941		86,349
20 August 1941	200,000	
15 January 1942	250,000	
20 January 1942		131,000
31 May 1942	300,376	
31 August 1942	325,235	
19 December 1942	398,270	
14 January 1943		250,000
20 May 1943	500,000	
July 1943		310,000
Autumn 1943		228,000
15 November 1943		220,621
1 December 1943	548,937	
Mid-August 1944	586,746	
Civilian workers repatriated to Belgium to May 1945	215,000	

Source: Haupt, "Der 'Arbeitseinsatz' der belgischen Bevölkerung", 82-4.

5. Introduction of compulsory labour assignments

The year 1942 was a turning point for labour policy in occupied Belgium and a number of factors came together to bring a sea change in the Military Administration's approach to recruitment. Labour policy in Belgium was characterised by caution and restraint in the first years of the German occupation, compared with the policies introduced in other occupied territories. Labour policy in Belgium was underpinned by the Military Administration's strong preference for voluntary recruitment. However, with flagging recruitment numbers, growing manpower needs and increasing pressure from Berlin, the Military Administration finally adopted more coercive recruitment measures during the course of 1942.

[54] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 168.

On 15 January 1942 the Military Administration celebrated the departure of the 250,000th volunteer sent to Germany. Leading official Reeder presented Mr Arys, a Flemish POW who had been released from German captivity and was taking up a second voluntary labour assignment in Germany, with a gold watch before invited press representatives at Brussels North Station.[55] However, the fanfare belied the Germans' growing dissatisfaction with the number of workers yielded by the recruitment program. Table 2 on page 48 shows the number of workers who had accepted contracts to work in Germany and the number of workers actually working in Germany at various intervals. Just days after officials marked the departure of the 250,000th Belgian worker for Germany, official statistics showed that there were only 131,000 Belgians working in Germany. This differential can be explained in part by the Military Administration's inflation of recruitment numbers and the fact that some workers were counted more than once in official statistics because they had signed more than one contract. It is clear, however, that many Belgians did not remain in Germany beyond the end of their first contract. Officials nevertheless lauded the successes of the recruitment program:

> It is not, however, about a record number of workers, but rather their willingness to work and actual performance. Up until now all the large companies, in particular the Junkers works, which employ almost 11,000 workers from this [military administration] zone, have confirmed [the Belgian workers'] strong willingness to work, skills, abilities and performance, which are only exceeded by those of the French and surpass the Dutch by far.[56]

The recruitment program was hailed as a success, both in terms of the number and quality of workers deployed. Officials also reported that a good balance had been achieved between the recruitment of workers for deployment in Germany and the policy of transferring orders to Belgian companies. Regardless of the obvious successes in some industries, experiences with Belgian employees varied across industries and from one workplace to another. Mining company Norddeutsche Hütte AG in Bremen-Oslebshausen had a relatively unsatisfactory experience with their Belgian employees. Company personnel records show a high staff turnover rate among them. Additionally, absenteeism also constituted a significant problem for the

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[55] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht, Allgemeine Übersicht für die Zeit 1.12.1941–15.3.1942*, 16.

[56] Quoted in Warmbrunn, *The German occupation of Belgium*, 230. A report by the Württemberg and Hohenzollern Chamber of Commerce also provided a very positive assessment of the performance of Belgian workers in November 1941, suggesting that Belgians workers had the highest productivity levels – ahead of the French. Quoted in Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 101-2.

company and resulted in a number of dismissals. Of the forty-eight Belgians employed by the company between the beginning of 1941 and the end of 1942, a total of eight employees were sacked due to unauthorised absence, seven were deemed unfit for deployment in the company's mining operation, a further four were released due to illness, one failed to return from leave in Belgium and three left the company for unexplained reasons. A total of fourteen Belgians who commenced employment with the company during this period remained until the end of the war.[57] While emphasising the successes of the recruitment campaign, Military Administration officials also conceded that recruitment levels had already begun to drop in the first half of 1941.

The imposition of a compulsory labour draft in Belgium had been under consideration since the introduction of a similar decree in the Netherlands. The Dutch civilian administration introduced compulsory labour assignments in the Netherlands in February 1941 and extended this to include compulsory labour service in Germany in March 1942 – several months before this measure was introduced in Belgium. Mansfeld prepared the conscription directives in January 1942. On 6 March 1942 the Military Administration introduced compulsory labour assignments in Belgium. However, the Military Administration's concerns about the impact the introduction of compulsory labour service in Germany would have on public opinion and reluctance to implement coercive recruitment measures delayed the introduction of a compulsory labour draft for work in Germany by several months.

Following the introduction of compulsory labour assignments within Belgium, the German authorities began to gear up for the imposition of a labour draft for Germany, introducing a raft of measures intended to create a pool of workers who could be more readily compelled to accept work in Germany. The Military Administration made a series of changes with the aim of rationalising the workforce and tightening their control over the labour market. The minimum working week in Belgium was extended to six eight-hour days for all Belgians and it became mandatory for mineworkers to work on Sundays. In order to limit the movement of labour, workers were required to obtain permission from the ONT before changing jobs and employers had to report any changes to a place of work. Employers were

[57] SVG/DO, R.451/Tr.75.702, List of Belgian employees at Norddeutsche Hütte AG in Bremen-Oslebshausen (dated 23.05.1951).

also required to employ married men and fathers with large families, and were not permitted to employ single men or widows. Other measures introduced during the course of 1942 included the closure of enterprises that were not crucial to the war effort and a ban on the establishment of new enterprises. Additionally, the decree of 6 March 1942 also obliged employers to provide the ONT with a personnel list. Rightly recognising that this was the first step towards the introduction of conscription of labour assignments in Germany, some employers delayed or refused to provide personnel lists. However, facing the threat of heavy fines and imprisonment, most eventually complied.

The Military Administration extended the labour draft to include service in Germany on 6 October 1942. According to the Amendment to the Decree on the Safeguarding of Workers for Tasks of Particular Importance, Belgian men aged eighteen to fifty and women aged twenty-one to thirty-five could be conscripted for deployment in the Reich. Married women and women with children were to be exempted. The preferred order in which men were conscripted was: i) single men ii) married men without children iii) married men with children. For women the preferred order for conscription was: i) single women ii) married women without children. Potargent emphasises that under pressure from the German authorities, the rules on conscription were not observed in numerous cases. Moreover, while German officials generally respected the age-limits that were placed on the conscription of workers for deployment in Germany, the age-limits were ignored in some cases.[58] As recruitment became more difficult, officials would become accustomed to breaking these rules and would implement more coercive recruitment measures in order to boost diminishing recruitment numbers.

6. Reactions to the compulsory labour draft

The Military Administration feared that the introduction of a compulsory labour draft would bring civil unrest in Belgium. The memory of the deportation of Belgian workers was an abiding legacy of the First World War and shaped labour policy in Belgium during the first years of the occupation. Leading officials recognised that of all the occupied territories Belgium was a special case due to the experience of the

[58] Potargent, *La mise au travail de la main-d'oeuvre belge*, 60-1. No age-limits applied to the conscription of workers for labour assignments within Belgium.

First World War and the introduction of conscription should be approached with great caution:

> It was clear to the Military Administration from the start that the measures would, in comparison to the orders that have been made so far, provoke a reaction that cannot be foreseen, which has its roots in painful memory of the "Deportations" during the First World War that has been reawakened in all sections of society and has no parallel in any other region.[59]

The Military Administration was reluctant to introduce a compulsory labour draft for Germany due to fears about the disquiet such measures would provoke. The compulsory labour draft was introduced on a piecemeal basis and later in Belgium than in other occupied territories, such as the Netherlands. The fears of the Military Administration proved to be justified, and the reaction of the Belgian population to the announcement of a compulsory labour draft for Germany was broad and swift:

> Growing civil unrest, both publicly and privately, has developed in all regions... the broad effect of which cannot be overlooked even today. The mood of hatred has now grown to the point of willingness to [participate] in active resistance.[60]

By April 1943 officials reported that the "anti-German sentiment had become wider and deeper as a result of the conscription".[61] As Reeder predicted a year earlier, the introduction of compulsory labour assignments in Germany jeopardised civil peace and led some Belgians who had tolerated the German occupation until that point to participate in acts of active resistance.

The introduction of compulsory labour assignments in Germany brought public outrage and provided ammunition to opponents of the Military Administration. The representative of the Head of the Security Police and Security Service in Belgium and Northern France reported:

> Using the legacy of the most terrible horror stories from the World War people are trying to engender anxiety amongst the whole population, and thereby emphasise in particular the lot of conscripted girls and women in the Reich, who people believe are hopelessly exposed to the most serious moral dangers.[62]

The Security Service reported that the conscription of Belgian workers for deployment in Germany was being used as a propaganda tool. The Security Service reported that the "these tendencies find fruitful ground amongst the working classes

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[59] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.22, A6.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., *Tätigkeitsbericht*, Nr.23, i.
[62] Ibid., AA553, *SP/SD Meldungen aus Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, 2/43, 4.

where there is widespread animosity toward taking up employment in Germany".[63] Anti-Nazi pamphlets appeared decrying the fate of conscripted workers and urging conscripts to refuse to cooperate. Belgian labour offices, as well as local mayors and other officials who cooperated with the Military Administration, were attacked, as resistance to compulsory labour service in Germany grew.

The compulsory labour draft for Germany, and in particular the conscription of women, brought fierce condemnation and a chorus of protests from the King, the Church and the Secretaries–General. On 17 December 1942 the King sent a letter to the President of the Belgian Red Cross, drawing parallels between the deportation of Belgians during the First World War and the introduction of the compulsory labour draft for Germany, requesting the assistance of the Belgian Red Cross in aiding conscripts in Germany. The Security Service reported in January 1943 that even clerics who had until that point of the occupation remained neutral were speaking out in their sermons.[64] For the most part, however, these protests fell on deaf ears. The conscription of Belgians for deployment in Germany brought renewed panic in Belgium. Just as thousands of Belgians had fled to France in the aftermath of the German invasion, many Belgians tried to flee to France in the first days following the introduction of the compulsory labour draft. On 10 October 1942 officials at the OFK520 in Mons reported to Group VII that they had taken the step of closing the French/Belgian border because Belgians were seeking refuge in France. The military police patrolled railway stations and 120 Belgians were arrested trying to leave Belgium. By 15 October 1942 the number of arrests had increased to 850.[65] However, despite efforts to prevent Belgians from escaping to France, where compulsory labour assignments had not yet been introduced, the sheer number of Belgians trying to flee across the "green border" into France proved overwhelming for the small number of military police.[66] Throughout the German occupation, flight to France continued to be a common method used by Belgians evading conscription. Others fled to the Belgian countryside, often joining the bands of resisters and other labour draft evaders, which became a growing problem for the Military Administration. Dutch labour draft evaders had also fled to the countryside, joining

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[63] Ibid., *SP/SD Meldungen aus Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, 1/43, 4.
[64] Ibid., 7.
[65] SVG/DO, R.184/Tr.33.462, Marburg Collection, 4/1836.1 7 (Film 1).
[66] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, Nr.22, A6.

groups of resisters, while those evading conscription in France often fled to join the Maquis.

The only concession made by the Military Administration in the face of vociferous protests was the cessation of the compulsory recruitment of Belgian women in January 1943, with the notable exception of domestic workers.[67] The Military Administration also promised that conscripted women would be permitted to return home; however, this promise was not fulfilled. Indeed, officials continued to exert pressure on conscripted women who sought to stay in Belgium after a period of leave and many conscripted women were forced to remain in Germany for the duration of the war. After agreeing to stop the conscription of women for deployment in Germany, German officials changed tack and intensified their efforts to conscript women for deployment in Belgium. This change in approach saw thousands of Belgian women forced to take up labour assignments in Belgium, with many deployed in armaments factories. Women who refused to respond to a summons for a compulsory labour assignment were arrested or sent to prison or an AEL. Although the demand on the part of employers for female workers was minimal, a campaign to conscript women for labour assignments in Belgium began in early 1944.[68] This policy of conscripting women for deployment in Belgium was directly linked to the campaign to recruit men for compulsory labour service in Germany. The conscription of women for labour assignments in Belgium continued and intensified during the final months of the occupation, as the Military Administration struggled to conscript male workers. Recruitment office staff were charged with the task of conscripting women in the 1918/1925 birth cohorts irrespective of whether they were single or married. Moreover, staff were instructed that no consideration should be given in cases where the women had children. Increasingly desperate, officials also explored the possibility of establishing forced labour camps for women in Belgium in early 1944.[69] The methods implemented to deal with the problem of flagging recruitment levels became more coercive as labour officials sought to recruit workers by any means and with little regard for the effectiveness of these methods or the negative impact repressive measures had on popular opinion.

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[67] Interestingly, it was on 27 January 1943 that limited labour conscription for German women was introduced.

[68] SVG/DO, R.184/Tr.33.462, Marburg Collection, 14/5095.5 (Film 8). In this period officials in Bruges, for example, reported that there were only forty-seven vacancies for women listed at the local labour office.

[69] Ibid.

7. "Combing-out" actions

Following the introduction of conscription, German officials embarked on a "combing out" program, primarily focussing on filtering Belgium's labour force for workers with much needed skills, which was combined with a number of subsidiary measures designed to release workers. The earliest conscripts came from key industries and were destined for deployment in German industry to fill immediate gaps in the labour market. This program mirrored the methods introduced in the Netherlands following the introduction of compulsory labour assignments.[70] According to the Military Administration's directives, Belgian companies were required to release an average of 25 percent of their personnel. Officials stressed that this figure was not a fixed rule but rather an average, and that some companies would not have to release any employees whereas others would be required to release their entire staff.[71] Additionally, the Military Administration sought to reorganise completely the structure of the Belgian workforce. According to a circular sent out on 22 October 1942, the personnel of companies should be composed of at least 50 percent of men older than forty-five years of age and 50 percent women.[72] Companies were forced to release younger men in favour of older men, particularly those with dependants, and women.[73] These measures were linked to the Military Administration's broader labour policies and were designed to utilise all available workers and thereby optimise the use of the labour available in Belgium.

During the first phase of the compulsory labour draft for Germany special recruitment commissions from the RAM visited Belgian workplaces to identify suitable workers. The military field headquarters in each region managed the compulsory labour draft at local level. A recruitment office was attached to each OFK/FK and was also supported by local branches. Most recruitment personnel were Belgians who were overseen by German officials. Recruitment office staff collaborated with the local branch of the ONT in order to gather information about businesses in their respective regions. The officials from the local ONT then visited

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[70] Werner Warmbrunn, *The Dutch under German occupation, 1940-1945* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1963), 72-7.
[71] Potargent, *La mise au travail de la main-d'oeuvre belge*, 61.
[72] Ibid., 59.
[73] On 10 April 1941 the Military Administration introduced a decree that gave recruitment offices the authority to force companies with more than five employees to replace younger workers with older workers or workers with a number of dependants. See Potargent's discussion of this decree Ibid., 19-21.

companies whose employees were earmarked for conscription in order to interview workers and establish whether there were any circumstances where conscription would cause particular hardship for a worker or their family. Company representatives were subsequently invited to attend a meeting at the OFK/FK. While the labour authorities consulted with employers with respect to the conscription of their employees, it should be noted that the instructions in the circular sent to ONT offices on 14 October 1942 stipulated that employers had no right to determine which of their employees would be conscripted.[74] Finally OFK/FK officials assessed manpower requirements at the meeting with company representatives and determined whether the company should be permitted to employ new workers to replace conscripted employees.

Once officials had selected the workers from company personnel lists, the workers were then summoned to attend the recruitment office and were notified that they were to be conscripted for a labour assignment in Germany. A female conscript who was amongst a group of workers conscripted in November 1942 recalled: "We worked at the cotton plant on the Nijverheids Quay [in Ghent] and received a notice that we had to present ourselves at the recruitment office through our employer. It was the unmarried women who received such a notice".[75] Conscripts often recalled that they were amongst a group of workers from the same workplace who were conscripted. In some cases, work colleagues were sent to Germany together and assigned to the same employer.

The "combing out" program led to resentment amongst Belgian workers. In a memo to OFK/FK staff dated November 1942, officials from Group VII emphasised: "For the conscription of workers for the Reich to be carried out smoothly, it is of great political importance that the perception that only the workers are bearing the burden of these measures does not take hold amongst the working classes".[76] Yet, despite officials' concerns regarding perceived unfairness in the application of the forced labour draft, officials nevertheless implemented measures that targeted workers. The head of the Security Service observed in February 1943, "Due to the urgent need for skilled workers in the Reich... the legitimate wishes and needs of

[74] Ibid., 60.
[75] SVG/DO, Madeleine B, D55655/338372. (Witness statement from Elisabeth V)
[76] Ibid., R.184/Tr.33.462, Marburg Collection, 4/1836.1 7 (Film 1).

loyal sections of the population could not always be taken into account".[77] The report concluded that the preference for skilled workers had caused resentments:

> In all parts of the country the criticism is being made that black-market traders and profiteers, by whom the valuable members of society feel exploited in the most crass manner, as well as the circles of the Anglophile bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, have not been the first to be conscripted.[78]

Belgian workers rightly felt that they were being targeted for conscription, while other social groups were escaping conscription. These resentments were also fuelled by rumours that wealthier Belgians bribed officials in exchange for their release from conscription. The Security Service duly investigated these allegations; however, no proof could be found to substantiate the claims. Officials acknowledged that these rumours were, nevertheless, damaging because they were "causing dissatisfaction amongst the population".[79] On 29 January 1943, Pöhls, a local group leader for the Nazi Party Overseas-Organisation in Brussels, felt compelled to write to August Schultze, head of Group VII, to warn officials about the impact that the perceived inequality in the conscription of workers was having on popular opinion amongst Belgian workers,"Criticism over the handling of the conscription of Belgian workers is being made amongst German-friendly circles".[80] Pöhls also reported that complaints were being made that the sons of influential Belgians had been included in the list of employees at welfare organisations such as the Secours d'Hiver, Foyer Léopold III and Red Cross, and even large companies, so that they could evade conscription. According to Pöhls, this avoidance of conscription "was having a very negative impact on public opinion amongst blue-collar workers and low-ranking white-collar workers and led to the view that National Socialism calls up small people for the purposes [of the labour draft], but not the rich".[81] On a practical level, it was also preferable to conscript skilled workers who required a minimum level of training for their new jobs in Germany and were already accustomed to industrial work. Certainly many middle-class and upper-class Belgians were spared from conscription for employment in Germany. Firstly, groups such as police officers, civil servants and university students were exempted from the compulsory labour draft. Secondly, the Military Administration pursued a policy of combing trade and

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[77] CEGES/SOMA, AA553, *SP/SD Meldungen aus Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, 2/43, 59-60. The representative of the Security Police and Security Service was answerable to Heinrich Himmler.
[78] Ibid., 60.
[79] Ibid., *SP/SD Meldungen aus Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, 3/43, 51.
[80] SVG/DO, R.184/Tr.33462, Marburg Collection, 4/1836.1 (2) (Film 1).
[81] Ibid.

the financial services industry for men who could be transferred to replace industrial workers who had been conscripted for work in Germany. According to Reeder's Activity Report for the period January to March 1943, officials planned to conscript 25 percent of skilled workers and those workers completing work training on a long-term basis (lathe operators, milling machine operators and specialist drillers) who were employed on the date of the company inspections in the armaments industry for deployment in Germany. As a substitute for every skilled worker from the armaments industry conscripted, companies were to be allocated one male worker and one female worker from trade or the financial services industry for retraining.[82] Middle-class conscripts were therefore more likely to be transferred to another workplace in Belgium. Moreover, Reeder reported in August 1943 that the planned measures to "comb out" trade and the financial services industry were yet to be carried out.[83] The compulsory labour draft decree stipulated that single women between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five were subject to conscription; however, women who had never worked were generally exempted.[84] Working-class women were therefore much more likely to be conscripted for employment in Germany, while middle-class women who were employed as white-collar workers were more likely to be conscripted for a labour assignment within Belgium. Thus it is clear that recruitment efforts were firmly focussed on recruiting workers who could be deployed in industry and that working-class Belgians therefore bore the brunt of the labour draft. This mirrors the effects of attempts to conscript German women to some degree.[85]

8. Age-group conscription

By spring 1943 it became clear that the pool of available workers who could be drawn from Belgian industry had largely been exhausted and the Military Administration turned to age-group conscription, calling up men in their twenties, although the "combing out" program continued. Recruitment statistics for the period January to April 1943 illustrate that officials fell far short of Sauckel's recruitment targets (see Appendix 2 on page 287 and Appendix 3 on page 288). The OFK589

[82] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.23, D12.
[83] Ibid., *Tätigkeitsbericht*, Nr.24, D15.
[84] Potargent, *La mise au travail de la main-d'oeuvre belge*, 57.
[85] In Germany, young women of all classes were conscripted for Labour Service, while middle-class women were sometimes volunteers in the Red Cross or the air-raid protection association.

Liège, OFK520 Mons and FK520 Antwerp recruited fewer than 10 percent of their quota, while the OFK672 Brussels and OFK570 Ghent recruited just 11.7 and 15.6 percent of their quotas respectively. Overall, 58,182 Belgians between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five were recruited; a figure that represents just 11.6 percent of the 500,000 workers whom officials hoped to recruit.[86] This failure to meet recruitment targets reflects the fact that labour was increasingly scarce and the labour draft only exacerbated problems with recruitment by angering the Belgian population, especially after officials resorted to using more coercive recruitment methods.

In September 1943 German officials decided to focus on conscripting men from the 1920/1921 birth cohorts, while continuing to recruit volunteers from all age groups. By focussing their recruitment efforts on the 1920/1921 birth cohorts, the Military Administration hoped to reduce friction with the Belgian population. In a letter to the chairman of the cabinet of Secretaries–General dated 15 September 1943, Reeder advised:

> Having taken into account the wishes put forward by the Belgian side, and in order to bring greater calm to wider sections of the population at same time, in the coming months the conscription measures would be limited to members of the birth cohorts born in 1920 and 1921.[87]

Reeder added that search measures for labour draft evaders would also be limited to members of the 1920/1921 birth cohorts. Increasing difficulties with recruitment led officials to widen their focus in March 1944; thereafter men born between 1922 and 1924 were conscripted. Two key methods were used to develop an overview of the age groups earmarked for conscription. Recruitment offices took extracts from municipal population records, compiling lists of all workers liable for conscription within each OFK/FK. Officials then used the population records to classify workers and prepare record cards. The records were then used to gather further information about the workers by sending out questionnaires and, in a small number of cases, asking the worker to attend a recruitment office.

9. Sperrbetriebe ("protected factories")

During the course of 1942/1943 a power struggle played out between Sauckel and Speer who adopted different approaches to solving the problem of increasing

[86] SVG/DO, R.184/Tr.33.462, Marburg Collection, 8/430-440 (1) (Film 12).
[87] Ibid.

industrial production. This power struggle had a direct bearing on labour policy in occupied Belgium. Developments in the military situation, most notably the declaration of war on the USSR and major military setbacks during the winter of 1942/1943, resulted in increasing manpower demands, strengthening Sauckel's hand and paving the way for the introduction of compulsory labour draft in Belgium. On the other hand, the mounting danger of bombing, which made it necessary to disperse industry as widely as possible, and the shortage of industrial capacity in Germany, led Speer to adopt a policy of awarding armaments contracts to companies in occupied Europe. But for this policy of transferring orders to be a success, Speer also needed to ensure that the employees of foreign companies producing for the German war economy were protected from Sauckel's recruitment drive. The Military Administration passed the Decree on the Protection of Recognised Enterprises of 29 January 1942.[88] The decree afforded greater protection to companies that were of particular importance to the war economy. Greater restrictions were placed on hiring and dismissing workers from these companies. "Protected factories" were given preferential treatment with respect to the allocation of workers. These companies were not, however, given protection from the conscription of their personnel after the introduction of compulsory labour assignments and many of their employees were conscripted during the "combing out" program without the Armaments Inspection being able to prevent their conscription. Speer became increasingly frustrated that workers, fearful of Sauckel's labour draft, were leaving their jobs in the armaments industry and going into hiding. On 8 October 1943 Speer introduced a decree that protected companies working for the German war economy in occupied western Europe. The employees of "protected factories" in which at least 70 percent of production supported the war effort were issued with release papers and were fully protected from conscription.[89] By the end of 1943, the Armaments Inspectorate had recognised 344 companies, with a total of approximately 420,000 employees, as "protected factories", with further requests still to be assessed.[90] By May 1944 there were 1,780 "protected factories" with a total of 906,344 employees.[91] Workers flowed into "protected factories" working for the armaments industry where they

[88] Ibid., R.497/Tr.22.832, *Verordnungsblatt der Militärbefehlshaber in Belgien und Nordfrankreich,* Nr.67–5.
[89] The forgery of release papers became a major problem for the Military Administration.
[90] Haupt, "Der 'Arbeitseinsatz' der belgischen Bevölkerung", 216.
[91] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.28, 54.

were afforded protection from Sauckel's recruitment drive. The establishment of "protected factories" therefore made recruitment even more difficult as thousands of workers were immune to conscription. Speer's policy of transferring contracts proved to be very successful, and, by the middle of 1944, 25-30 percent of German industrial production came from occupied western Europe and Italy.[92] Speer's policy of protecting companies working for the war economy outside Germany, by contrast with Sauckel's policy of conscripting foreign workers for deployment in Germany, enabled Germany to optimise the human resources of occupied Belgium, while at the same time sparing many Belgians from labour service in Germany and combating the problem of labour draft evaders.

10. Conscription of university students

To the credit of the Belgian authorities, the universities remained open during the occupation, by contrast with the Netherlands and Norway where the conscription of students forced the virtual closure of universities.[93] The Military Administration used discretion with respect to Belgian elites and intellectuals and had a long-standing policy of exempting them from the labour draft. It is therefore clear that working-class Belgians were more likely to be conscripted. Students in higher education, secondary schools and vocational schools were initially exempted from the labour draft. The initial exemption of students in higher education prompted a "flight to the universities" by people who wished to avoid conscription. However, under pressure from Sauckel, the Military Administration announced in March 1943 that students would only be permitted to register at higher education institutions after serving one year working in Belgian industry or in Germany, following graduation from secondary education. Additionally, first-year students were required to complete six months' labour service from 1 May to 1 October 1943 before they could be admitted to the second year of their course. The Nazi authorities had introduced a requirement for German intending students to perform six months' labour service (*Arbeitsdienst*) before first matriculation; this requirement was introduced in 1933 for males and by spring 1934 for females.[94] Students who failed to report for labour duty were liable to

[92] Sijes, "Dutch Forced Labour in Germany, 1940-1945," 24.
[93] Warmbrunn, *The German occupation of Belgium*, 234.
[94] National Labour Service (*Reichsarbeitsdienst*), which was introduced for all men in June 1935, obliged all German men between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five to undertake six months' labour service, mainly in agriculture and on public works projects. Compulsory Labour Service for young German women was introduced after the outbreak of war in September 1939. Jill Stephenson,

be sent to Germany for an indefinite period. Belgian officials made a concerted effort to thwart attempts to conscript students. The Secretary-General for Education ordered institutions not to communicate instructions relating to the decree to students, and German officials were therefore forced to publish their mandates in the press. The German authorities also requested lists of students from the heads of educational institutions. However, the heads of some institutions refused to comply with the order and faced conscription themselves as punishment. German officials also sought to force secondary schools to provide lists of pupils in their final year of secondary education. Efforts to gather information about final-year pupils were met with similar opposition from schools and educational authorities. University officials also refused to request a certificate confirming completion of their six months' labour duty when registering students for the second year of their course. A total of approximately 4,000 students were put to work in the summer of 1943 – 71 percent of students. Three quarters of conscripted students were deployed in industry.[95] In view of the relatively small number of Belgian students deployed in Germany, this issue is dealt with only briefly here.

11. Conscription as a punitive measure

When German officials found that the number of labour draft evaders captured by the military police barely made a mark on the growing number of labour draft evaders, officials soon implemented more ruthless measures. The Military Administration passed decrees in late April 1943 providing for the use of punitive measures in cases where workers evaded conscription, including sanctions against labour draft evaders and their families or others who supported them. Sanctions ranged from the confiscation of radios and bicycles to the conscription of other family members in place of labour draft evaders.[96] On 28 June 1943, the Military Administration authorised the heads of OFKs/FKs to impose prison sentences of up to six months upon labour draft evaders.[97] Punitive measures introduced to combat the growing

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"Women's Labour Service in Nazi Germany," *Central European History* 15, no. 3 (1982): 247. Also see Stefan Bajohr, "Weiblicher Arbeitsdienst im 'Dritten Reich': Ein Konflikt zwischen Ideologie und Ökonomie," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 25, no. 3 (1980).

[95] Almost 100 percent of first-year university students in Ghent signed up. The highest levels of draft evaders were at Leuven and Liège. Warmbrunn, *The German occupation of Belgium*, 233-4.

[96] SVG/DO, R.497/Tr.22.832, *Verordnungsblatt*, Nr.100–7.

[97] Ibid., Nr.104–1.

problem of labour draft evaders were not an idle threat and were applied in many cases.

In June 1944 Victor P, a teacher from Dinant, was taken hostage in place of his son who had evaded the labour draft. Despite his age and unsuitability for deployment in Germany, officials at the OFK520 Mons transferred Victor P to a reception camp in Etterbeek, Brussels, ready for transportation to Germany. However, Victor P was fortunate and on 28 June 1944 officials from Group VII wrote to the OFK520 Mons to advise that Victor P was not fit for deployment in Germany and that "the taking of hostages in this case was pointless".[98] German officials were quite prepared to use repressive measures against labour draft evaders and their families. Twenty-four-year-old Arsène C was conscripted on 21 June 1943 and left the family home a few days later saying that he was departing for Germany. However, on 15 August 1943 members of the military police visited the family home looking for him. The officials advised that because their son had failed to obey the conscription order it had been decided that his fifty-two year old father, Felicien C, would be deported in his place. Felicien C was sent to a labour camp in northern France. His wife, Laure A, was left to run the household and care for their disabled daughter on her own. Laure A wrote to officials in November 1943 explaining the great hardship the conscription of her husband had caused. In response to her pleas for her husband's release, officials callously responded on 19 January 1944, "Your son, who was earmarked for deployment in the Reich, is still in hiding. The release of your husband therefore cannot take place".[99] Officials showed little regard for the consequences of conscripting other family members and used punitive measures to compel labour draft evaders to depart for Germany. Punitive measures were also used to engender fear in the population and discourage other conscripted workers from trying to evade conscription. These actions must also be viewed as acts of retribution by officials who were becoming increasingly frustrated and wanted to punish those seen to be hampering recruitment.

On 26 July 1943 miners at Ougrée-Marihaye went on strike protesting against the bread shortage. According to the account of German officials, the OFK589 Liège ensured that workers were provided with enough bread, but workers went on strike again without explanation on the following day. The OFK responded quickly,

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[98] Ibid., R.184/Tr.33462, Marburg Collection, 14/5092 (Film 6).
[99] Ibid., Marburg Collection, 4/1800 2 (3) (Film 1).

arresting striking workers and transporting them to Germany.[100] The Military Administration clearly made an example of the striking workers in order to send a warning to others. Despite attempts by the miners' employer to secure their release, they were not permitted to return to their jobs in Belgium. Conscription could also come as a result of raising the ire of German officials. In 1943 eight employees of the ONT branch in Bruges refused to cooperate with the labour draft, tendering their resignations in the presence of the ONT's national director, FJ Hendriks. German officials made an example of the Belgian labour officials by conscripting them for labour assignments in Germany:

> After the employees of the Bruges labour office resigned in protest after the decree of 28 June 1943 was announced and therefore ended their employment with the Bruges labour office, the German Military Administration had no other option but to deploy these workers more effectively, like other Belgians who are either unemployed or have less important jobs.[101]

While German officials justified the conscription of the former ONT employees on the basis that they were no longer employed and were therefore liable for conscription, it is clear that they intended to send a warning to other Belgian labour officials who might have also had objections to cooperating with German officials.

Belgians who were involved or suspected of involvement in the resistance were in some cases conscripted and sent to Germany. In June 1944, Belgian woman Aloysia H was arrested by the *Gestapo* in a raid in Repel on suspicion of involvement in the resistance. After a long interrogation, during which Aloysia H denied involvement in the resistance much to the irritation of officials, she was deported to a camp near Dresden where she remained in appalling conditions until the liberation.[102] The Military Administration also carried out raids against "asocials", conscripting smugglers, black-market traders, Belgians who refused to work and convicted criminals for deployment in Belgium and Germany.[103] This measure was intended to appease sections of Belgian society angered by the labour authorities' strong preference for the conscription of workers.

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[100] Ibid., Marburg Collection, 4/1836.1 (2) (Film 2). Letter from von Falkenhausen to the employer of the striking mining workers, Société Anonyme d'Ougrée-Marihaye (dated 16.08.1943).
[101] Ibid. Letter from Falkenhausen (dated 31.08.1943).
[102] Ibid., D63463/377581.
[103] Ibid., R.184/Tr.33.462, Marburg Collection, 4/1836.1 (7) (Film 1).

12. Call-up and interview procedures

Interviews were normally conducted by the main regional recruitment office, with local branches following up where needed. Officials sent a summons to workers ordering that they attend the recruitment office on a particular date. In cases where workers ignored the summons, officials sent a second and, if necessary, third summons, which were increasingly threatening in tone.

Belgians who had the misfortune of being members of the 1920-1924 birth cohorts lived in fear of being called up. Fernand L recalled: "I remember the dread that filled us each time the postman passed because the threat of a summons from the recruitment office ordering us to depart for the '*boche*' hung over our heads like the sword of Damocles".[104] Fernand L finally received a summons on 2 April 1943. His first reaction was to ignore the summons, burning it in the fire, but a month later a third summons arrived and at the beginning of June he received another summons accompanied by a threat of reprisals against his father if he did not attend the recruitment office. Faced with threats against his family, Fernand L felt resigned to his fate and attended the recruitment office along with four friends. The five friends were conscripted and departed for Dessau together in July 1943.

Officials interviewed workers in order to determine whether there was any reason to exempt a worker from the labour draft. Those who were interviewed were divided into three categories:

Group A: Released from conscription on the basis that they were already undertaking work that was deemed important;
Group B: Released temporarily or indefinitely due to illness;
Group C: All other persons.

Workers who fell into the third category were liable for conscription and were given a medical examination to confirm that they were in good health. The doctor conducting the medical examination was required to determine whether a worker was a) fit for deployment b) temporarily unsuitable for deployment c) permanently unsuitable for deployment. Workers who were temporarily unfit for conscription were given a release from conscription for a limited period of time and could be summoned again for reassessment by the recruitment office after that period had lapsed. In cases where a worker was deemed fit for deployment, the doctor also indicated whether a worker was capable of heavy, medium or light duties. Doctors

[104] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Fernand L.

were instructed to ensure that no illnesses that would soon require medical treatment in Germany were overlooked. In view of the threat to public health in Germany and the high potential of the spread of disease in close living quarters in camps, where most workers were housed, doctors were advised to ensure that workers with communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, venereal diseases, contagious skin conditions, or afflicted with lice, were not cleared for labour assignments in Germany.[105] The identification of cases of tuberculosis was particularly crucial as health officials in Belgium reported in September 1941 that there had been a leap in the number of reported cases of tuberculosis and that there was no drop in the number of cases reported during the summer months.[106] Records of the deaths of Belgian workers in Germany show that tuberculosis was the cause of death in many cases.

Despite the emphasis on ensuring the fitness of conscripted workers, the sheer number of workers who needed to be assessed clearly limited the doctors' capacity to complete a thorough examination. A memo dated 4 March 1943 reported that the doctor responsible for medical examinations at the OFK672 Brussels had requested assistance because "a single doctor cannot examine more than 1,200 people per week".[107] Fernand L later described the superficial medical examination he was given as a "parody": "Open the mouth, [check] the teeth and a few taps on the back. Voilà, fit for work in Germany".[108] The facilities at the disposal of the doctors conducting medical examinations also limited the thoroughness of examinations. An official from Group XI – Medical Division noted on 20 April 1943 that screens needed to be set up at the FK520 Antwerp in order to "improve the quality of the medical examinations that have been superficial until now".[109] The lack of suitable facilities for the examination of workers meant that not only were workers forced to suffer the indignity of having to undress and stand naked with others who were also waiting, but moreover the lack of basic privacy meant that doctors were perhaps not as thorough as they might otherwise have been.

The inadequacies of the medical examinations conducted in Belgium were soon evident from reports that came back from Germany. A file note dated

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[105] SVG/DO, R.184/Tr.370.23, Marburg Collection, 8/430-440 (1) (Film 12). Letter to medical officers at the OFKs and FKs outlining procedures for medical examinations (dated 26.07.1943).
[106] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.17, i.
[107] SVG/DO, R.184/Tr.370.23, Marburg Collection, 8/430-440 (1) (Film 12).
[108] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Fernand L.
[109] SVG/DO, R.184/Tr.370.23, Marburg Collection, 8/430-440 (1) (Film 12).

9 November 1942 recorded that *Wehrmacht* officials had raised concerns that people suffering from tuberculosis and exophthalmic goitre, bed-wetters and workers who had already been sent back from Germany more than once due to unfitness for deployment were amongst those recruited for work battalions.[110] In early 1943 some companies called for more accurate medical examinations because of the "poor state of health of some new conscripted workers, amongst whom there were also workers who were not fit for work".[111] A subsequent memo dated 22 April 1943 regarding the Medical Examination Service for the labour draft noted that the number of examinations undertaken by doctors should not be more than 100 per day.[112] The case of Roger B who was recruited in Ghent in 1943 raises questions about how thorough the doctors were in their medical assessments. Although Roger B had a pre-existing heart condition, he was nevertheless conscripted and sent to work in Halberstadt, Saxony. A few months after his arrival, Roger B suffered a recurrence of his heart problem and had to remain in bed until he recovered.[113] These examples and, in particular, the fact that some new recruits had already been sent back from Germany more than once because they were not fit for deployment, indicate that the labour authorities were probably more interested in meeting recruitment quotas than the fitness of recruits. Thorough medical examinations were crucial not only to ensure that conscripts were fit, but also because the living conditions in the camps aggravated certain medical conditions and could lead to a rapid deterioration in a worker's health.

Once officials determined that there were no grounds for exemption, conscripts were asked to sign a "voluntary" employment contract agreeing to take up employment in Germany. Workers faced a choice between signing the employment contract and taking a stand against their conscription by refusing to sign. As an incentive for workers to sign the contract, conscripts were offered the payment of an allowance of 750bfrs for the purchase of provisions such as clothing for their stay in Germany.[114] Additionally, interim financial support was paid to the families of

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[110] Ibid., R.184/Tr.33.462, Marburg Collection, 14/5091 (Film 6). Work battalions were established to build air-raid shelters and complete clean up and construction work after bombing raids in Germany.
[111] Ibid., R.184/Tr.37.023, Marburg Collection, 8/430-440 (1) (Film 12).
[112] Ibid.
[113] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/36, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Roger B (from series letters exchanged between Roger B and his family in Ghent between 1943 and 1944).
[114] This payment was introduced in 1942 in order to increase recruitment levels and amounted to 60RM.

workers with dependants. The families of conscripted workers received a weekly payment of 75bfrs for their spouse and 25bfrs for every child under the age of sixteen, which was paid for a period of six weeks. Workers could also be issued with a pair of shoes, the cost of which was later deducted from their earnings, and a ration card for the purchase of clothing. Officials stressed that workers needed to take all necessary items, as they would not be able to obtain shoes or clothing in Germany. Letters sent home by Belgians working in Germany frequently contained requests for family members to send shoes and clothing because these items could not be obtained in Germany. In some cases volunteers returned to Belgium to obtain winter clothing. As the war progressed only workers whose belongings had been destroyed in bombing raids were issued with ration cards for clothing or shoes. Germans also found it difficult to purchase clothing – from 1943 clothing coupons were available for mourning attire but not regular clothes.[115] Workers who went to Germany ill equipped would find life in Germany even more difficult.

François V, a worker from Brussels who was conscripted for deployment in Brunswick in early 1943, illustrates the quandary many conscripts faced:

> During this time my wife was expecting a child and I requested a postponement of my departure, which was refused. I refused to sign for the famous 750bfrs bonus, but the recruitment office [staff] put my back to the wall, saying that if I signed they would guarantee that I would be given leave to assist at the birth, or alternatively they would force us to leave and we would have no hope of returning. It was really under constraint and following my conscience that I signed. There are some who like to pretend that we were volunteers.[116]

François V's account illustrates the great pressure workers were placed under by recruitment officials to coerce them to sign a contract. Officials made it clear to conscripts that refusal to sign a contract would result in adverse consequences and that, in the case of workers with dependants, refusal to sign a contract would cause their families greater hardship. Interim financial payments were vital for workers' families because there were often long delays before they received the first wage transfers. Conscripts with dependants had no real economic alternative to working in Germany, unless they were prepared to jeopardise their family's material well-being. François V's account also draws attention to the fact that workers who signed contracts, however reluctantly, stood accused by some Belgians of working in

[115] Stephenson, *Hitler's Home Front*, 183.
[116] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, François V.

Germany voluntarily. After the war, contract-signing was considered in some quarters as a gesture of collaboration. Nevertheless, given that conscripts would be transported with or without their consent, signing the contract was the most prudent course of action.

The account of conscript Maurice L, a dairy worker from East Flanders, offers further insights into the methods used by recruitment officials to force Belgians to depart:

> At the beginning of 1943, my brother, who was one year younger than I, and I received a summons to go to work in Germany. Many others from my municipality and also my street received the same summons. We were required to present ourselves a few days later at the recruitment office in Ghent where the date we had to depart for Germany would be decided. A group of ten men from our street agreed to go to Ghent together. Only a few days after we went to Ghent and knew the date of our departure, we decided that no one should depart.

After speaking with his employers Maurice L decided it would best if he sought a release from the recruitment office. At the recruitment office Maurice L met a German official who provided information about working in Germany and tried to persuade him to agree to accept a labour assignment in Germany. Trying to find a way out of conscription, Maurice L told the official that he did not want to go Germany and preferred to remain at home, and, besides, he was needed at the dairy where he worked. The official listened to Maurice L's objections and offered a three-week postponement of his departure. However, when Maurice L enquired why he could not be granted a longer postponement to his departure, he did not respond and left the room. Upon his return, the official led Maurice L to a small office where two Germans were working. Maurice L begun to feel uneasy:

> When I had been sitting there for an hour I began to have a bad feeling. I thought I should ask to go to the bathroom, if they let me go I would try to escape because I could see that there was something fishy going on. I asked to go to the bathroom. Hereupon one of the two Germans leapt up and told me that I was going with them. I thought yes, I am sitting here imprisoned, which was not right.[117]

Feeling extremely anxious, Maurice L began to look for a way to escape. After detaining Maurice L for several hours, two officials took him to the Sint Pieters Barracks in Ghent where he was held for two days before being deported to Germany. Witnesses who saw officials take Maurice L to Ghent's Sint Pieters

[117] Ibid., Maurice L.

Barracks notified his family who brought him food and clothing. Maurice L's story illustrates how officials sought to secure a worker's agreement to depart voluntarily in the first instance, but soon resorted to more heavy-handed measures if workers resisted conscription. The circumstances of Maurice L's departure are fairly typical of those who resisted conscription, who were generally imprisoned until they could be transported to Germany in closed carriages to prevent escape.

Employment contracts set out the date and time of the conscript's departure, the place of their labour assignment, work hours, rate of pay and details of any daily allowance to be paid to workers who were separated from their spouse. Officials stressed the importance of providing workers with concrete details of their wages in order to avoid problems later when workers found that their earnings were lower than they anticipated. Additionally, some employment contracts also provided details of the type of accommodation that would be provided and deductions for accommodation and food. The amount of detail provided with respect to the work assignment varied. Some deportees were simply given the details of the regional Labour office and local Labour office where they had been assigned and in other cases workers were given the details of a specific employer. Workers were then issued with transfer papers, which they needed to take to Germany with them.

The story behind Marcella P's conscription illustrates the difficult position in which many Belgians found themselves and demonstrates that the line between voluntary and compulsory labour assignments is not black and white:

> On 15 November 1941 my husband died in France and I was therefore left without any income. In 1942, in the course of July, I went to register to go to work in Germany voluntarily at the labour office in Wetteren. Shortly after, I received financial support so that I no longer needed [to get a job]. I went back to the labour office in order to withdraw my application to depart. However, they would not allow me to withdraw my application so that I had to depart.[118]

Marcella P's application to be recognised as a deportee after the war was rejected on the basis that she had, by her own admission, volunteered to work in Germany. The Belgian state did not recognise volunteers as victims of the war under the category of labour deportees, even if workers had broken their contracts after a period of voluntary employment in Germany and had subsequently been conscripted and forced to return to Germany against their will, or, as in this case, withdrew their

[118] SVG/DO, D378440. The labour office Marcella P refers to here is the ONT.

application. This issue is further complicated by the fact that while volunteers were initially employed on a fixed-term basis, by early 1941 the German labour authorities replaced fixed-term contracts with open-ended contracts, forcing volunteers to remain in Germany indefinitely.

13. Labour draft evaders

Conscripts faced the dilemma of whether they should depart. Opinions were divided in the occupied territories as to whether conscripts should depart. On the one hand, younger men came under pressure to depart so that older men might be spared from conscription, "When you don't go, then someone else must go. You don't have a wife or children to support".[119] Whereas others suggested that conscripts should go underground because "it was not right to go to Germany".[120] Reeder reported that in the beginning those called up showed a certain understanding for the conscription measures and almost always obeyed summonses and conscription orders.[121] Most conscripts departed out of fear of the consequences, but as time passed an increasing number sought to avoid deportation by going into hiding and from the start of 1943 the Military Administration already observed signs of widespread opposition. Between 4 January and 6 February 1943 a total of 4,571 conscripts failed to depart for Germany; this represents 18 percent of those scheduled to depart. Additionally, 30-40 percent of those summoned by the recruitment office failed to respond.[122] The ranks of labour draft evaders swelled as conscripted workers who evaded departure were joined by deportees who had failed to return to Germany after leave periods or had escaped and made their way back to Belgium. As the months passed the number of conscripts who actually departed for Germany diminished even further.

Officials normally followed up conscripts who failed to depart for Germany. In the first instance, officials passed on the details of labour draft evaders to the local municipal authorities. If this step failed to yield results, files were given to the military police. Officials faced the problem of finding labour draft evaders at home and often made repeated visits without success. Labour draft evaders often vacated their accommodation after their conscription and thus visiting their registered address proved fruitless in many instances. The military police frequently conducted raids in

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[119] Johan Meijer, "Zwangsarbeiter in Berlin," in *Niederländer und Flamen in Berlin 1940-1945*, 140.
[120] Ibid.
[121] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.23, D14.
[122] Ibid.

areas that black-market traders were known to frequent, as many black-market traders were labour draft evaders who could not work legally. At Easter 1943 the Military Administration marshalled 2,000 military police officers and soldiers to conduct a major raid in search of labour draft evaders. The raid was reported to be a success, with a reduction in the number of labour draft evaders in the aftermath of the raid.[123] When an individual was stopped on the street and could not produce appropriate documentation, officials worked on the presumption that they were labour draft evaders, arresting and detaining them until they could be deported. However, with insufficient staff, the military police could not systematically pursue labour draft evaders and contract breakers. The military police therefore relied upon sporadic raids to apprehend labour draft evaders – following the same pattern that was seen in the Netherlands. Labour draft evaders from regions that bordered France often fled across the border to France, while others fled to the Belgian countryside, most notably the Ardennes. Military Administration officials noted that the French authorities showed little inclination to deport Belgian nationals and many Belgian labour draft evaders were able to take up employment in France. In other parts of Belgium, labour draft evaders were more likely to seek refuge in their own cities or neighbourhoods, often with friends or family.

The ranks of recruitment office staff and the military police burgeoned as the Military Administration struggled to recruit workers against a rising tide of opposition. The measures implemented to deal with labour draft evaders and contract breakers demanded more and more staff, as the military police struggled to keep up with the number of cases given to them. Military Administration officials also complained that the Belgian police did not assist with efforts to apprehend labour draft evaders.[124] While the Military Administration increased the number of military police, the number of staff available to pursue labour draft evaders was simply insufficient to deal with the ever-increasing number of contract breakers and labour draft evaders.

Going into hiding brought great difficulties, especially for workers with dependants, who needed to consider how they would support their families. Measures introduced in the months following the introduction of compulsory labour assignments in Germany made life harder for labour draft evaders. The Military

[123] Ibid., *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.24, D14.
[124] Ibid., D16.

Administration prohibited employers from employing labour draft evaders and ordered municipal authorities to deny them access to ration cards for food. Anna R recalled:

> I was in hiding, one day here and one day there, I was at my sister's [place] in Welle and also at my brother Frans' [place] at Gaston de Scheppersstraat in Erembodegem. I can't recall with certainty how long I spent in hiding. I never worked anywhere while I was in hiding.[125]

Anna R initially tried to go into hiding, but was eventually forced to depart. Anna R returned to Belgium on leave in July 1943 and stayed when her leave period ended. Labour draft evaders could not be legally employed and were reliant on the support of friends and family. In a bid to protect labour draft evaders, the Belgian authorities refused to cooperate with the order to withhold ration cards and the decree was eventually suspended. After spending a period of time in hiding, some labour draft evaders probably eventually departed rather than place any further burden on their families.

14. Recruitment numbers October 1942 – July 1944

The Military Administration initially reported good recruitment numbers. The number of workers recruited each week rose from 3,528 in the third week of October 1942 to 10,240 in the last week of October 1942 – the highest number of weekly recruits during the occupation to that point.[126] However, this early success soon disappeared as the growing resistance hampered recruitment and meant that officials were unable to meet the recruitment quotas set by officials in Berlin. Sauckel ordered the Military Administration to recruit 120,000 workers in the period April to June 1943. However, only 59,966 workers were recruited.[127] Reeder reported that of the 500,000 recruits from the 1917–1924 birth cohorts ordered by Sauckel a total of just 72,185 had been recruited up to late June 1943. In the second quarter of 1943 a total of 23,457 conscripts failed to depart and a further 102,132 did not respond to the summons sent by the recruitment office. The Security Service reported in March 1943 that the "conscripts who departed were being called the stupid ones".[128] Reeder concluded that the "principal reason for the failure to meet the recruitment target was

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[125] SVG/DO, D43057/354336.
[126] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.22, D12.
[127] Ibid., *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.24, D14-5. This total also included 9,011 contract breakers who were returned to Germany.
[128] Ibid., AA553, *SP/SD Meldungen aus Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, 3/43.

the ever greater resistance to employment in the Reich".[129] In the third quarter of 1943 Reeder again reported very poor recruitment numbers, noting that only 33 percent of the target number had been sent to Germany.[130] Month after month, the Military Administration reported that it had failed to meet its recruitment targets.

In late 1943 a commission headed by General Unruh tendered a scathing report on the recruitment campaign in Belgium. The commission concluded that the personnel of Group VII had expanded enormously after the appointment of Sauckel and the scale of the administrative apparatus could not be justified by the results of the recruitment campaign.[131] The commission launched an attack on the methods adopted by Sauckel, which took no account of the political situation in Belgium or the tensions the repressive recruitment measures caused. The commission concluded that the "recruitment measures were no longer successful and that the more intensive and rigorous the recruitment apparatus was the poorer the results that were achieved".[132] The concerns raised by the commission point to the failure of the compulsory labour draft in Belgium and demonstrate that Reeder had been correct in his belief that the introduction of a compulsory labour draft would hinder rather than help the recruitment drive. The failure of the compulsory labour draft enabled Speer to win support for the policy of transferring contracts, which saw fewer and fewer Belgians depart for Germany.

In the first quarter of 1944 the Military Administration reported that 19,597 Belgians who had broken their employment contracts had been sent back to Germany, including 8,323 women.[133] From early 1944 German companies sought to recruit voluntary workers directly in Belgium. These recruitment efforts yielded just 159 voluntary recruits in March 1944.[134] Officials reported that a total of 6,324 workers were recruited for deployment in Germany during April 1944, including 1,065 workers who had broken their contracts and were returned to Germany.[135] Reeder concluded that Belgian workers were less inclined than ever to depart for

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[129] Ibid., BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, Nr.24, D14 & D16.
[130] Ibid., *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.25, D13.
[131] Ibid., *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.26, A9. The number of staff employed by Group VII had grown to 800 in the preceding months.
[132] Ibid., *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.25, D19. Excepts of the commission's report were included in Reeder's Activity Report.
[133] Ibid., *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.27, 51.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid., *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.28, 53.

Germany.[136] Reeder attributed this significant reduction in recruitment numbers to impact of the Anglo-American bombing of occupied France and Belgium. The worsening military situation also strengthened the resolve of the Belgian population because they sensed that the end of the war was near. Additionally, many Belgians were unwilling to depart, leaving their families to an uncertain fate. In the latter stages of the occupation, the Military Administration also faced the problem of transporting workers to Germany because Allied bombing had inflicted significant damage to the railway networks.

15. Conclusions

According to Reeder's Activity Report for June 1944, the total number of Belgian workers recruited for work in Germany between June 1940 and 30 June 1944 was 577,579.[137] Selleslagh has calculated, on the basis of his research into the records of the International Red Cross, that a total of 189,542 Belgians were forced to work in Germany between 1 November 1942 and 31 July 1944 and a further 224,300 Belgians had worked in Germany voluntarily between June 1940 and October 1942.[138] These figures differ significantly from the official German recruitment figures. This difference can be explained, in part, by the fact that workers who had taken up more than one contract in Germany were often counted more than once in the official German recruitment figures and officials routinely inflated recruitment figures (see Appendix 4 on page 289 for statistics recruitment numbers and the number of labour assignments commenced). Workers deployed in Germany represent 89.35 percent of the total number of Belgians deployed outside Belgium: a further 23,394 were deployed in other countries, including France. Potargent argues that roughly 10 percent of the Belgian workforce was deployed in Germany.[139] According to Potargent, "[This] relatively favourable result was assured solely through the wise politics followed by the Department of Labour and Social Welfare and the active resistance of this department from the start of the occupation".[140] The recruitment program was less successful in Belgium than other occupied territories

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[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid., *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.30, F2.
[138] Selleslagh, "L'emploi," 162. The official Belgian figure from 1945 for the number of volunteers was 120,000. Fernand Baudhuin, *L'économie belge sous l'occupation, 1940-1944* (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 1945), 82.
[139] Potargent, *La mise au travail de la main-d'oeuvre belge*, 79.
[140] Ibid.

due to the greater caution exercised by the Military Administration and the increasing opposition of the Belgian authorities.

The compulsory labour draft in Belgium was in many ways an abject failure. The introduction of conscription proved unpopular and threatened the recruitment of voluntary labour in Belgium. While the introduction of compulsory labour assignments initially brought success and some of the highest monthly recruitment numbers in the first months of the compulsory labour assignments, within months the number of recruits who departed diminished substantially. Recruitment numbers never reached the ambitious targets set by Sauckel. A similar pattern was seen in the Netherlands where Sauckel set the quota of 467,000 workers for the period January 1943 to July 1944. Only 163,819 Dutch workers were delivered during this period.[141] Sauckel's recruitment targets must therefore be viewed as totally unrealistic and his methods counterproductive, as the increasingly coercive recruitment measures jeopardised voluntary recruitment. In the final months of the occupation, the recruitment campaign in Belgium reached an impasse, yielding pitifully few workers – hardly justifying the manpower required to run recruitment offices.

In the Netherlands, for example, there was a higher degree of collaboration on the part of the Dutch authorities when compared with Belgium. Sijes argues that "at least in the beginning, the fight against unemployment and the expectation of a soon-to-be-realised 'New Order' formed the basis for cooperating with the occupying power" and some high-ranking Dutch civil servants continued to cooperate with the German occupying force in order to prevent more dangerous action by the Germans.[142] While some of the first Dutch workers to depart for Germany in June 1940 were volunteers, the majority were unemployed workers forced to accept labour assignments in Germany under penalty of having their benefits cut.[143] Sijes emphasises that the Depression heavily influenced the economic policy of the government in power and that the Dutch government was forced to take measures to protect its own economy. In the Netherlands "the general character and seriousness of unemployment led to the opinion that the state must have greater authority in combating this evil – indeed, that if need be it must be allowed to

[141] Sijes, "Dutch Forced Labour in Germany, 1940-1945," 28.
[142] Ibid., 43-4.
[143] Ibid., 1.

encroach on the freedom of the individual".[144] The Belgian Secretaries–General, by contrast, sought assurances from the Military Administration that Belgian workers would not be forced to work in Germany, in spite of the high unemployment in Belgium after the invasion. The refusal of the Belgian authorities to cooperate with the Military Administration on a number of key points, such as the introduction of the *Arbeitsbuch* system of labour control, the conscription of university students and the withdrawal of ration cards from labour draft evaders, hindered the recruitment program. The differing political stance of the Belgian and Dutch authorities made an appreciable difference to the outcomes of the labour recruitment program in each country and probably spared many more Belgians from conscription. In the final months of the war the German authorities focussedtheir efforts on maximising industrial production in Belgium, quietly abandoning compulsory the labour draft for Germany.

[144] Ibid., 3.

CHAPTER TWO:
The Living Conditions of Belgian Workers in Germany

The living conditions of Belgians deployed in Germany are a central focus of this study of the social history of the *Ausländereinsatz*. Key issues such as housing, the management of foreign workers' camps, food, hygiene and health will be examined in order to illuminate the experiences of Belgian workers in wartime Germany. Heusler has emphasised that the camp system remains one of the few under-researched aspects of the Nazi totalitarian regime.[1] While much work has been done to identify camps, with a number of regional studies that document camps appearing in recent years, much less is known about the day to day realities of camp life. This study focuses on Belgian workers' letters and postwar testimony, which are compared and contrasted with both official rhetoric on the treatment of foreign workers and the approach of those who were involved with the implementation of the *Ausländereinsatz* at a local level. Personal accounts are used extensively to provide an impressionistic view of the lives of Belgian workers in wartime Germany and highlight their broad range of experiences there. Another key focus of this study is the health of Belgians who worked in Germany, as an indicator of their treatment, and living and working conditions. The Company Health Insurance Fund records of Hamburg ship-building company Deutsche Werft are analysed to provide an impression of the health of workers over the course of the war and the ailments experienced by Belgians deployed in Germany.[2] The health and medical treatment of Belgian workers will also be examined in close detail through the examination of individual cases in the context of case studies of Belgians deployed in Berlin and Düsseldorf in later chapters. We will see how the housing crisis in wartime Germany benefited Belgian workers in a number of key ways. Belgians, especially Flemings, were marked out for privileged treatment as western European workers. However,

[1] Heusler, *Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft*, 12.
[2] SVG/DO, R.219/Tr.26.686, Betriebskrankenkasse der Firma Deutsche Werft Hamburg List. This summary was produced by BLO Ghilain after the war on the basis of the records held by the Deutsche Werft Hamburg Company Health Insurance Fund for the period 1941–1945.

we will see how the prolongation of the war began to erode the racial ideology that shaped the treatment of foreign workers and paved the way for a more pragmatic approach to their treatment. Developments during the latter stages of the war led to the deterioration of the privileged position Belgians enjoyed.

In line with the general strategy of *Blitzkrieg*, a key principle that underpinned the Nazi *Ausländereinsatz* was that foreigners would work in Germany only temporarily, returning to their home countries once the war was over. The living facilities provided for foreign workers were therefore transitory and makeshift in nature. During the early stages of the war foreign workers were housed in private homes, halls, empty wings of factories and DAF camps – in short, any building that could be converted into living quarters.[3] However, the end of *Blitzkrieg*, the prolongation of the war and the impact of the Allied bombing prompted officials to embark on a program of mass construction in order to ease the housing crisis and minimise the security threat posed by the burgeoning number of foreigners living in Germany by bringing them under greater control. Efforts to construct more camps for foreign workers were, however, largely cancelled out by the Allied bombings. Herbert concludes, "At no point during the war was there ever really a 'satisfactory' organisation of the camps for foreigners".[4] Shortages of labour and building materials and higher construction priorities, on the one hand, and the perpetual cycle of bombing, on the other hand, meant that the number of barracks places destroyed outstripped the number of places that were constructed, and the Nazis were ultimately unable to come to grips with the housing crisis.

The guidelines for the housing and treatment of foreign workers in Germany mirrored Nazi racial ideology. According to the decree prepared by the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA), foreign workers were divided into five main groupings, wherein existed various sub-groups. The term *Westarbeiter* or "western worker" did not accord with Nazi racial ideology, which distinguished between peoples of Germanic stock and those who were considered to be racially alien (*fremdvölkisch*). While Dutch, Danish, Norwegian and Flemish workers were considered Germanic, French and Walloon workers were classified as racially alien. According to official policy, civilian workers of Germanic stock could be lodged in private

[3] Homze, *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany*, 264.
[4] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 217.

accommodation, whereas Walloon and French civilian workers were not permitted to take up private accommodation. Following German policy, it was more common for Flemings to be housed in private accommodation than Walloons. French and Walloon workers rarely had the opportunity to have any influence upon where they were housed.[5] By contrast with civilian workers from western Europe who enjoyed relative freedom, POWs were housed in separate camps, where a much harsher disciplinary regime prevailed. Camps for Belgian POWs were generally surrounded by barbed wire fences and run by armed *Wehrmacht* guards who escorted POWs to their places of work. This harsh disciplinary regime for POWs remained in place for the duration of the war.

1. Camp accommodation

The term forced labour camp (*Zwangsarbeiterlager*) was not used during the Nazi period, but rather is a contemporary term that has largely superseded the now obsolete term foreign workers' camp (*Fremdarbeiterlager*). In view of the fact that camps generally did not exclusively house conscripted or forced workers, but often housed both volunteers and conscripts, the term forced labour camp is in many ways a misnomer. Camps can be divided into two broad categories: camps for civilian workers and camps for POWs. Camps in each category can then be divided into numerous sub-categories depending on who ran the camp, the type of administration at the camp and the nationality and legal status of residents. The boundaries between the different types of camps were also fluid.[6] The most common type of camp for civilian workers was the so-called *Gemeinschaftslager* – the majority of which were run by private companies, with a few run by the DAF. Additionally, the SS ran its own concentration camps, external or satellite camps and labour education camps.

Foreign workers' camps sprang up across German cities during the war, transforming the urban landscape. According to the estimates published in the Nazi newspaper the *Völkischer Beobachter* in October 1943 there was a total of 22,000 camps in Germany, which housed two-thirds of the foreign workers, while the

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[5] Heusler, *Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft*, 176. My examination of responses to the *Enquête Travail Obligatoire* survey yielded few examples of Walloons who were lodged in private accommodation. Nevertheless, on the basis of the limited information available, the tentative conclusion may be drawn that Walloons who were lodged in private accommodation were more likely to be engaged in white-collar jobs in Germany.

[6] Ibid., 237.

remaining third was housed in private accommodation.[7] Homze emphasises that it is difficult to assess the accuracy of these figures, as the term "camp" was very broad and could refer to anything from a shed to a vast complex that housed thousands of workers. He nevertheless suggests that these figures seem very high, in view of the fact that the DAF, which held responsibility for all foreign workers in the Reich, with the exception of agricultural workers, reported in 1944 that it administered 1,000 camps directly and oversaw the running of a further 4,600. This would imply that, based on the figures reported in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, there were approximately 16,400 camps in rural areas.[8] In rural areas many foreign workers lived on family farms. The figure of 22,000 is therefore clearly exaggerated. More recent regional studies of camps for foreign workers have shown, however, that German cities hosted hundreds of camps during the war years. Sustained research on camps in Berlin, for example, has led to the identification of over 1,000 camps within the boundaries of the Berlin Autobahn ring.[9] In addition to purpose-built barracks that were constructed to house foreign workers, a wide variety of buildings were converted into accommodation for foreign workers: disused rooms in factories; run-down work halls; barns; sheds; rooms in cellars; ballrooms; theatres; pubs; restaurants; guest houses; hotels; and sporting and recreational facilities. The general designation *Lager* was applied broadly to the accommodation established for foreign workers in the Reich and no distinction was made between the different types of buildings that were utilised. Aside from differences in terms of the types of buildings that were used to accommodate foreign workers, camps also varied significantly in terms of size. While just five to ten workers might be housed in a small camp, the majority of camps housed 100 to 200 workers and larger camps housed 1,000 workers. Exceptionally large camps housed 2,000-3,000 workers or more.[10] These significant variations in the type of buildings used to accommodate foreign workers and the size of camps meant that living conditions and the regime in camps differed enormously.

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[7] Quoted in Homze, *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany*, 267.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Rainer Kubatzki, *Zwangsarbeiter- und Kriegsgefangenenlager: Standorte und Topographie in Berlin und im brandenburgischen Umland 1939 bis 1945: eine Dokumentation*, ed. Berlin-Forschungen der Historischen Kommission zu Berlin, vol. 1 (Berlin: Berlin-Verlag Spitz, 2001), 11.
[10] Ibid.

Labour administrators placed the burden of providing suitable accommodation for foreign workers upon employers. According to the decree published by Sauckel in November 1942, German companies should only be assigned foreign workers if they could accommodate them in individual camps according to nationality or, if this was not possible, they were required to ensure that workers of different national groups were segregated and housed separately within camps.[11] Official policy also stipulated that foreign workers should be segregated according to gender. Sauckel preferred to house workers of different nationalities separately wherever possible in order to reduce friction amongst residents.[12] The most obvious source of friction amongst camp residents was the differentiated treatment afforded to foreigners, depending upon their position in the Nazi racial hierarchy. Thus the preference to segregate workers probably related more to the practicalities of managing thousands of foreigners, rather than out of consideration for national or linguistic differences.[13] Yet even from the outset of the *Ausländereinsatz,* German officials struggled to house workers in accordance with official regulations. Reeder reported in his monthly Activity Report in August 1940 that Belgians were being lodged with Poles, Czechs and workers of other nationalities.[14] While German officials generally tried to adhere to these rules during the first years of the war, the housing shortage caused by bombing and the arrival of large numbers of Russians in late 1942 meant that the strict rules with respect to housing could not be applied consistently and were relaxed significantly in many instances. The worsening housing situation as the war continued meant that officials relented, quietly ignoring the ban on housing different national groups together. The strict segregation of males and females was similarly abandoned. In the final years of the war, single-sex camps were rare, and in most cases camps were simply loosely

[11] Rafael R Leissa and Joachim Schröder, "Die Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen der ausländischen Arbeitskräfte in Düsseldorf," in *Zwangsarbeit in Düsseldorf. "Ausländereinsatz" während des Zweiten Weltkrieges in einer rheinischen Grossstadt*, ed. Clemens von Looz-Corswarem, (Essen: Klartext, 2002), 150-1.
[12] Homze, *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany*, 266.
[13] Heusler's research, for example, has shown that problems arose in Munich when *Ostarbeiter* were housed together in camps with much better placed western European workers. Heusler, *Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft*, 179.
[14] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, 10-Tage-Bericht, Nr.2.

divided into male and female sections.[15] The gap between the living conditions of eastern and western Europeans narrowed over the course of the war, as the exigencies of war and the need to optimise economic production eroded Nazi racial ideology.

Living conditions in camps were diverse and ranged from generally good to deplorable. Factors such as the availability of sanitation facilities, communal rooms, cooking facilities, camp canteens, underground air-raid shelters, medical personnel, sick bays and recreational facilities, as well as freedom of movement and access to public transport played a decisive role in shaping living standards in camps. The arrival of large numbers of Soviet POWs in late 1942 marked a turning point and living conditions deteriorated markedly in the last two years of the war, especially in the urban areas.[16] Homze emphasises that, while western Europeans' living conditions varied, their housing was by no means poor. He argues that the bulk of the German evidence suggests that, by contrast, eastern peoples suffered terrible privations in Germany.[17] While the sufferings of *Ostarbeiter* should not be underestimated, it must be noted that Belgian conscripts arrived in Germany at a time when the housing situation was worsening and the personal testimony of Belgians, the majority of whom lived in cities, indicates that many Belgians had very poor living conditions in Germany.

The number of residents who were housed in each barracks and the furnishings provided varied enormously both from one camp to another and over time. Most barracks in purpose-built camps were fitted with rudimentary furnishings and provisions. The guidelines for standard barracks established by the Reich Labour Service in April 1942 set out three basic models for barracks for foreign workers:

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[15] Heusler, *Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft*, 238. Heusler emphasises that segregation was introduced to prevent sexual relations between camp residents. However, the security services treated sexual relations between camp residents with indifference and rarely sought to prohibit such contacts.

[16] The living conditions of foreign workers were generally better in rural areas; however, few Belgians were deployed in rural areas.

[17] Homze, *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany*, 270-1.

Table 3: Standard barracks types (from April 1942)[18]			
Type	*RAD RL IV*	*RAD RL IV*	*RLM 501/34*
Occupancy	18 civilian workers or non-Soviet civilian POWs	36 Soviet POWs	12 female civilian workers
Sleeping accommodation	9double bunk beds	2-level plank beds	6 double bunk beds
Cupboards	9 double cupboards	None	6 double cupboards
200 cm tables	2	3	1
Seating provisions	18 stools	6 benches (200 cm in length)	12 chairs
Cutlery and crockery (per person)	1 bowl, 1 plate, 1 cup, 1 cutlery set	1 bowl, 1 cup and 1 spoon	1 bowl, 1 plate, 1 cup, 1 cutlery set
Bedding (per person)	1 straw mattress, 1 pillow case, 2 bed covers, 2 hand-towels	1 straw mattress, 1 pillow case, 2 coarsely-woven blankets, 2 hand-towels	1 straw mattress, 1 pillow case, 1.5 sheets, 2 bed covers, 2 hand-towels

Source: Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 118.

Not all camps, however, followed the same model. At the *Gemeinschaftslager* Gustofstrasse in Magdeburg, for example, there was a total of twelve barracks, which were each divided into twelve rooms accommodating twelve men.[19] Nevertheless, the accounts provided by Belgians who lived in purpose-built barracks generally confirm that their barracks housed eighteen or twenty residents and conformed to the official guidelines. In accordance with Nazi racial ideology, the barracks for Soviet POWs were more crowded and were equipped with only the bare minimum of furnishings and other provisions. Western European workers were, by contrast, better provided for both in terms of the number of residents housed in each barracks and the furnishings and provisions that were supplied. Additionally, barracks for female workers housed fewer residents and were better equipped than those provided for their male counterparts. Some Belgians witnessed the privations experienced by *Ostarbeiter* at first-hand. Belgian Marcel V who visited the camp for *Ostarbeiter* with a Russian colleague reported that the unfortunate *Ostarbeiter* were accommodated in barracks without any drawers and with just one cover for their bed. He recalled that the Russians were frail and suffered from illness.[20] Some Belgians were also acutely aware of how badly some other national groups fared. These

[18] This model of camp was also used to house families. Rainer Kubatzki, "Irgendein Lager gleich um die Ecke," *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 9, no. 9 (2000): 71.
[19] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Victor B.
[20] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Marcel V.

workers felt pity for *Ostarbeiter* and were grateful for the privileged position they enjoyed.

The models put forward by the Reich Labour Service were simply guidelines and were not always observed. Even at the time when the guidelines for barracks accommodation were prepared, wartime shortages had already prompted the authorities in some parts of Germany to ban the provision of bedclothes to foreign workers. In Düsseldorf, for example, bedclothes were no longer provided for foreign workers from the end of 1941, in spite of clear evidence of the threat of an epidemic that a lack of clean bedclothes would bring.[21] Similar bans on the provision of bedclothes were also introduced in other parts of Germany. In Munich, for example, the provision of bedclothes to foreigners was banned in spring 1942.[22] These examples illustrate the gap between official guidelines and the reality in camps. In theory western European workers were better provided for than Russian workers in terms of the provisions and furnishings supplied in barracks accommodation; however, local officials did not always follow guidelines and western Europeans' privileged treatment was not necessarily always assured, particularly during the latter stages of the war.

The cheap timber construction of many barracks afforded residents little protection from the cold. Victor B provided the following description of his barracks: "The interior of the barracks was constructed of planks of natural pine and the floor was made from poplar wood that had not been made into planks, which left a large join and allowed the cold in during winter".[23] While barracks were normally equipped with a small stove for cooking and heating, fuel shortages meant that workers could not heat their barracks. With coal in short supply, some foreigners resorted to chopping down trees from nearby woods in order to heat their barracks.[24] Of course, cutting down trees was prohibited and those who sought to supplement their coal rations in such a way had to reckon with punishment if they were caught.

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[21] Frank Sparing, "Die medizinische Behandlung von Zwangsarbeitern und Zwangsarbeiterinnen in Düsseldorf und die städtischen Krankenanstalten," in *Die Medizinische Akademie Düsseldorf im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Michael G Esch (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1997), 271.
[22] Heusler, *Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft*, 240.
[23] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Victor B.
[24] Ibid., AB1202, Lucien Boskin, "*Témoignage* 1943-1945" [account written in 1988].

The living conditions in makeshift accommodation were often less satisfactory. Many Belgians report that they were housed in cafes, theatres and large halls. Fernand Lambermont who worked in Dessau described his accommodation as follows:

> It was an old theatre, the Bierpalace. We were approximately 200 men, the complete lack of sanitation, no natural light due to there being no windows [and] the rats ran all over the floor ceaselessly. I remember that one night I was bitten by a rat on my big toe, it was the bite that woke me up. For a number of days I suffered from pain in my foot.[25]

As this former resident's account reveals, large numbers of workers were often housed together in buildings that were unsuitable. Overcrowding was a major problem in many camps. Toilets and washing and cooking facilities often had to be shared between many residents in overcrowded barracks. Gustave B also recalled that his makeshift accommodation was not equipped with a sufficient number of toilets or washing facilities for the large number of residents:

> On the floor where we were located there was another dormitory adjoining our dormitory, which was occupied by Russians – both men and women. At the side of the latter there was a very small room where we could wash ourselves in a very basic fashion, of course with cold water. Next to this small room, there was a toilet solely for use at night that had to serve more than 300 people. Imagine the filth, one literally walked through the excrement.[26]

In this case, western Europeans and *Ostarbeiter* lived in adjoining dormitories in a converted building and shared toilet and washing facilities. This account highlights just how deplorable conditions were in some makeshift camps and it is not surprising that infectious diseases could easily spread under such conditions. Russian men and women were housed together in the same dormitory, whereas Belgian men and women were not housed together in dormitories or barracks unless they were married couples or families. Marcel Audenaert recalled that at the *Betriebslager* "Sporting" in Leipzig changing rooms were used to house married couples who were separated from unaccompanied male residents.

Nazi officials set minimum standards for the accommodation of foreign workers; however, some employers failed to meet even the basic requirements. For example, in some camps there were twice as many workers as health standards

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[25] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Fernand L.
[26] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Gustave B.

allowed.[27] The Nazis provided few incentives for the employers to maintain living standards in their camps. When companies complained that the 0.50RM daily charge imposed upon foreigners was insufficient to cover housing costs, officials suggested that employers crowd more beds into the buildings or join forces with another company to establish a joint facility.[28] The location, type of construction, size and living standards in camps were determined not by binding guidelines, rather by local imperatives and requirements, as well as the availability of building materials and manpower.[29] Living conditions in camps were also determined to a significant degree by the approach adopted by camp commanders, company officials and the local authorities:

> The organisers and those who benefited from the labour of foreign workers provided the bare necessities to exploit and preserve their workers. Some did more, also holding Christmas celebrations, providing additional food and coal, supplying good work clothes and looking after the sick. Others did this to a lesser extent or not at all.[30]

In spite of economic constraints and the scarcity of food and coal, particularly as the war continued, some employers and camp commanders treated foreign workers well and worked hard to help them, providing additional rations and coal at their own cost. Heusler emphasises that most directives, guidelines and decrees published by central agencies with respect to the minimum requirements for living standards and security measures in camps for foreigners were adhered to broadly, but local employers and officials often took into account limitations due to the wartime conditions. Local authorities and camp administrators could therefore exercise a significant degree of discretion.[31] Local conditions and the approach of the local authorities and camp management led to wide variations in living conditions – both across Germany and even the same region or city.

The level of supervision in camps varied significantly. In Düsseldorf the *Arbeitslager für ausländische Zivilarbeiter – Am Mühlenweg* (civilian workers' camp) or *"Alte Mühle"* camp was established in Düsseldorf-Heerdt by the Gebrüder Böhler & Co AG Edelstahlwerk in 1941. The camp was divided into two parts: the

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[27] Homze, *Foreign Labour in Nazi Germany*, 266.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Heusler, *Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft*, 237.
[30] Kubatzki, "Irgendein Lager gleich um die Ecke," 71.
[31] Heusler, *Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft*, 239.

camp for western European workers housed an average of 241 workers; the camp for *Ostarbeiter* housed 542 workers.[32] Although the camp housed civilians, residents were nevertheless subject to a strict surveillance regime. The company established guard posts at the camp that were manned day and night by unarmed civilian guards. Workers were also escorted to and from work by camp guards. A similar regime was imposed upon the 400-600 workers who were resident at the foreign workers' camp (*Lager für ausländische Arbeiter*), which was established by the company Rheinmetall-Borsig at Helmutstrasse 45/Kanzlerstrasse 21 in Düsseldorf-Rath. The camp was surrounded by a wooden fence and was patrolled by armed members of the factory police (*Werkschutz*).[33] Some security measures were relaxed as the war continued; however, what is not clear is whether the camp management felt that the measures were no longer necessary or whether labour shortages meant that strict measures could no longer be enforced. By stark contrast, civilian volunteers from Belgium, France, Italy and Poland- were housed in a building in the best part of the city at the *Lager* Achenbacherstrasse 55 in Düsseldorf-Düsselthal. The approximately thirty to forty residents were free to come and go and some even had their own room with cooking facilities.[34] In some smaller camps there was no on-site overseer, but rather the camp was run by company officials who only intervened if there were problems. It is also worthwhile to note temporal shifts. For example, in some cases civilian workers employed in the manufacturing of secret weapons were housed in concentration camps for security reasons. At first they were not treated as prisoners, but were free to come and go. Towards the end of the war, however, no distinction was apparently made between these civilian workers and the prisoners, the former receiving the same treatment and conditions as the prisoners.[35] As the war progressed strict differentiation was no longer maintained and distinctions between different nationalities or types of workers began to melt away. It is therefore

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[32] The information provided after the war by the company is somewhat contradictory, as it indicates that western workers were housed at the camp from 1941-1945, although the *Westarbeiterlager "Alte Mühle"* (camp for western European workers) was apparently constructed in June 1942, subsequent to the establishment of the *Ostarbeiterlager* "Alte Mühle" in February 1942. SVG/DO, BUR 71 "Camp Douteux. Reg. Bez. Düsseldorf 1/406".

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] International Tracing Service, *Catalogue of camps and prisons in Germany and German-occupied territories, September 1939 - May 1945*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Arolsen: International Tracing Service 1949-1950), 3.

important to avoid generalisations and to differentiate between different types of camps and recognise changes in the regime in camps over time. The situation of residents in these camps was largely dependent on the approach adopted by company officials and the camp personnel. The security regime at camps was particularly important because freedom of movement enabled foreign workers to try to improve their position. Workers who were free to leave the camp often spent much of their free time seeking additional food to supplement their meagre rations. Western European workers, who generally enjoyed greater freedom of movement, therefore often had greater opportunities to improve their material situation in concrete ways. There was also a social aspect to this. Belgians who had friends or family members living in the same city were able to visit in the evenings and at weekends and therefore had greater opportunities to establish a support network.

Nazi officials envisaged that the camp commander would play a key role with respect to security in Germany, helping to keep the increasing number of foreigners under surveillance and control:

> As the housing of foreign workers in closed camps is an important means for surveillance, as well as a means for the work of preventative enlightenment, close contact must always be maintained with the management of camps. It is thereby important to check that camp commanders, who are appointed in part by the DAF, and in part still appointed by companies, are suited to [serving as] auxiliary police officers.[36]

In Nazi parlance the "work of preventative enlightenment" signalled the communication of Nazi values and winning foreign workers over to the Nazi cause. Officials hoped to co-opt camp commanders in order to gain greater control over Germany's foreign population by placing the management of camps in the hands of Nazi sympathisers. But in reality labour shortages meant that alongside committed Nazi Party members who strode around in uniforms, company employees, old war veterans and even foreigners acted as camp commanders. The broad spectrum of people who were appointed to supervise camps meant that the atmosphere in camps varied enormously.

Belgians frequently reported that they had little or no contact with the camp commander: "There was nothing to report with regard to the camp commander, we

[36] Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf (HStAD), RW37/23, Bl.35. The guidelines for the treatment of workers from the occupied territories in western Europe deployed in the Reich issued by the Higher SS and Police Chief West, Düsseldorf (dated 08.02.1941).

had no contact with him".[37] This arrangement probably suited all parties: camp commanders were happy to leave workers alone if there were no perceived problems with order in the camp; the workers themselves often preferred to avoid contact with the camp management. Marcel C similarly observed: "In the event that the food was bad we had contact with the camp commander, otherwise we left this man in peace. He was human after all!!! Most [of us] were afraid of him".[38] Unsure of how the camp commander might react, camp residents often avoided dealings with the camp management altogether unless it was absolutely necessary. Others reported that their experience with the camp commander was positive. Flemish worker Felix G recalled: "We got along well with the camp commander (he was human)".[39] Roger D similarly observed: "The camp commander was human, but demanded discipline".[40] In these cases the relationship between the camp commander and residents was characterised by mutual understanding and respect; residents and the camp commander adopted a pragmatic approach in order to make the best of the situation. The approach adopted by the camp commander set the tone for relations in the camp and workers report a much more positive experience in cases where the camp management showed a greater understanding of their situation. Gustave B recalled: "There were no problems with the camp commander. He was a veteran from the 1914-1918 war. He did his best to improve our food and to obtain various items for work, boots, caps, toothbrushes etc".[41] Walloon Jean E recalled that "relations were good with the head of the camp who lent us a gramophone and some records, including the Marseillaise".[42] In spite of the fact that providing foreigners with the use of a gramophone and a recording of the French national anthem would have undoubtedly met with the disapproval of Nazi officials, the camp commander used his discretion with this small act of kindness. Kind acts improved relations between residents and camp personnel and made an immeasurable difference in the lives of foreign workers. These examples illustrate that some camp personnel showed empathy

[37] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Emile S.
[38] Ibid., AA1216/9, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Marcel C.
[39] Ibid., AA1216/13, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Felix G.
[40] Ibid., AA1216/4, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Roger D.
[41] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Gustave B.
[42] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jean E.

towards the plight of camp residents and genuinely tried to ameliorate their living conditions in whatever ways they could.

Belgians often emphasised in accounts of their time in Germany that the camp commander behaved in a correct or proper manner. Robert G who was employed by the German Railways in Heldenbergen, Kreis Friedburg, observed:

> Relations were correct and cool with the track engineer from where we worked who was responsible for running the camp, but things deteriorated because there were illnesses, both real and fake. This man rarely smiled, but I must say that he was just and gave the impression that he was concerned with our well-being.[43]

In this case, the Reichsbahn employee appointed to manage the camp was concerned with the well-being of the residents under his charge, and generally tried to ensure that the foreign residents were treated properly, while still keeping a proper distance between himself and residents. But, as Robert G observes, relations between workers and the camp management could become strained, especially if camp commanders or the company management suspected workers were feigning illness in order to avoid work. Camp personnel and company managers often took the view that it was incumbent upon both parties to fulfil their responsibilities: workers were expected to work hard, as well as abide by camp and workplace rules; camp personnel and company management would generally endeavour to ensure that workers were adequately provided for in exchange for their hard work. A failure on the part of residents to keep their side of the bargain could sour relations. Belgian F Joly recalled how relations with the company management deteriorated significantly after the German military experienced major setbacks and a number of thefts:

> The factory guards deployed in the camp after the [D-Day] landings of June 1944, and in response to numerous instances of theft from the kitchen and the theft of potatoes, chickens and rabbits at the expense of the Germans who lived in the surrounding area were real savage handlers, who forced those who were genuinely ill, and unable to get up, to go to work. The camp manager tried to limit their brutal excesses, but he was paralysed because they were directly answerable to the factory director.[44]

In cases where camp rules were broken, managers might clamp down on residents. In response to increasing disorder in the camp, the director of the company that ran the camp deployed the factory police in the camp, largely sidelining the camp

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[43] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Robert G.
[44] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, F Joly.

commander. While the camp commander tried to curb the excesses of the factory police members, his authority had diminished and he could do little to protect the residents. Marcel D similarly emphasised the impact the changing fortunes of the war had on the attitudes of the camp personnel: "Relations were reasonably good with the camp commanders. Some were strict and moody depending on the point during the war. In 1944 and 1945 they were nasty even because of the tense situation and the bombardments".[45] Residents also observed a discernible change in the approach of company managers after Germany suffered a series of military defeats and it became clear that Germany would lose the war. German cities descended into chaos towards the end of the war and foreign workers became increasingly brazen in their defiance of the camp regulations and the law. The German authorities and camp commanders often imposed a harsher regime in many camps in a last-ditch attempt to maintain control.

Camp personnel might use the slightest infraction as an excuse to withdraw a worker's privileges. Jean Bo recalled: "Relations between the camp commander and we French and Walloons were not good. We [should have] received ten cigarettes per day, but rarely received them for some reason or another they were withheld from us".[46] Bullying and violence were also common features of life in some camps. Roger Do recalled: "We often had arguments with the [camp] commanders. On this point, I received many kicks in the backside... to punish us they took away our cigarettes (three per day, our ration)".[47] Some camp personnel were rather unpleasant characters who conducted themselves with impunity and were adept at meting out corporal punishment. Some foreigners ingratiated themselves with the Germans and were elevated to the privileged position of interpreter or camp commander. In many larger camps foreign interpreters were appointed to aid communication. Walloon Victor B reported: "An interpreter, a Flemish volunteer, advised us of the rules and the sanctions that would await us if we failed to obey the rules or in the event that we accosted German women".[48] Belgian conscripts harboured a certain degree of distrust towards volunteers and treated them with caution. Louis Z recalled: "The

[45] Ibid., AA1216/9, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Marcel D.
[46] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jean Bo.
[47] Ibid., AA1216/15, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Roger Do.
[48] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Victor B.

camp commander was a poor old beggar [who] looked like hell... he was assisted by a self-styled interpreter (Polish). The latter was a repugnant creature and was dangerous. With a smile, he would denounce you to the police".[49] Foreign camp personnel were in some cases more dangerous due to their willingness to collaborate with the German authorities. Workers had to be on their guard with such individuals and residents' dealings with them were underpinned by a sense of distrust and anxiety.

In view of the fact that living conditions in camps varied enormously, it is not possible to provide a description that is representative of life in all camps. Nevertheless, accounts provided by Belgian workers can be used to reconstruct an impressionistic view of camp life. For some the first night in the barracks was one of their most abiding memories:

> The first night was awful, the straw mattress with a kind of mat, the bedclothes that emitted a horrible odour of disinfectant as well as the noxious air produced by twenty men and the heat of the July summer night that condensed the smell of sweaty feet.[50]

Camp life came as a shock for Belgians arriving in Germany for the first time. Their initial shock upon their arrival at their accommodation gave way to resignation, as workers adjusted to life in the barracks. Life in barracks was rarely plain sailing: "Disagreements alternated with periods of solidarity, it was about black-market trading, noise, the use of the kitchen, theft, misunderstandings due to language and the like".[51] While some workers tried to make the best of a situation they could not change and simply adjusted, for others the experience of camp accommodation prompted them to quickly seek a better alternative:

> The first few days I slept okay in the barracks, but after a couple of weeks the "little creatures" (lice and fleas) made their appearance. I then went to find private accommodation with a friend. We were able to get a small room of 2.9m by 1.9m with a good bed, a table and a chair.[52]

The two friends shared a small room and must have lived at very close quarters indeed; however, this was still seen as far preferable to the living conditions in camps. As Flemings, the two new arrivals enjoyed the privilege of taking up private

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[49] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Louis Z.
[50] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Fernand L.
[51] Ibid., AA1216/9, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Michel D.
[52] Account written by A de Bruyn and L van Cauwenberghe quoted in Seberechts, *Hier gaat alles zijnen gewonen gang*, 79.

accommodation. Others were less fortunate and had no alternative to camp accommodation.

Many Belgians reported that relations between workers in camps were generally good, although conscripted workers often felt distrust towards volunteers. For many Belgians one of the most vivid memories of their time in Germany was the friendships they formed. Belgian conscript Fernand G recalled: "I had the chance to make very good friends, almost like brothers".[53] In a show of true solidarity, some residents shared what little they had with their friends: "One shared the packages and helped one another".[54] The companionship of fellow countrymen was an important aspect of camp life, which helped foreign workers cope with life in Germany without their friends and family. Felix G recalled: "The atmosphere was good because we all remained together from [the time of our detention at] the Louvain Prison. We lived as a true community and relations always remained good".[55] Many others made similar observations:

> Our camp consisted almost completely of young men from around Ghent... Given that most of the residents came from the same region, relations were good.[56]

> The occupants of the barracks all came from Charleroi and relations were always perfect. Above all, a spirit of solidarity reigned.[57]

Often a number of Belgians from the same region were conscripted at the same time and were transported to Germany together. Amata L was one of a group of female employees of Antwerp's Grand Bazaar department store conscripted in December 1942. The women were sent to work for Robert Karstens Elektrotechnische und Metallwarenfabrik in Berlin and were all accommodated together in a camp.[58] The recruitment office had initially planned to send Amata L to Bremen, but upon her request officials permitted her to go to Berlin with her colleagues. Other Belgians also managed to stay with friends or acquaintances by destroying their transfer papers and boarding trains that were bound for other destinations. Such cases illustrate that although it was difficult to escape conscription and deportation to

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[53] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Fernand G.
[54] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, F Joly.
[55] Ibid., AA1216/13, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Felix G.
[56] Ibid., AA1216/15, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Marcel A.
[57] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jean E.
[58] Ibid., AA1216/12, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Amata L.

Germany, some Belgians took the initiative and managed to secure a more favourable situation for themselves. Some groups stayed together from the time of their transport to Germany until their liberation and repatriation. This engendered a sense of togetherness and solidarity as a result of shared experiences. This was especially the case with workers who were conscripted on the basis of their employer's personnel list or following the introduction of age-group conscription. It was no coincidence that workers from the same region were housed together. Some camp commanders recognised the benefits of more flexible management of residents. F Joly noted: "The camp commander left it up to the guys to organise themselves [in barracks] according to their affinities or their region of origin etc".[59] The camp commander recognised allowing residents to decide amongst themselves who would live in each barracks would minimise friction amongst residents and foster better relations. Being housed with fellow Belgians offered some key benefits: residents spoke the same languages; and you were able to obtain news about home when new residents arrived or others visited home on leave. This was particularly true of those who came from the same part of Belgium who spoke the same dialect and had perhaps lived just a few kilometres from each other. Those returning from leave communicated news about how their home communities were faring, and also often took letters and packages to and from Germany. With post sometimes taking weeks to arrive, sending mail with those who returned to Belgium on leave allowed workers and their families to receive up-to-date information. At home in Belgium, families passed on news and information about the situation in Germany through the grapevine. In mid 1943 Roger B was sent to work in Halberstadt in Saxony. While his mother was very anxious about her son after his departure, in her letter of 17 July 1943 his mother reported that she had spoken to "another worker [who] told them a few things that put them more at ease". Roger B's mother worked in a shop and through talking to other Belgians who also had family members working in Halberstadt, the family was able to obtain more information about the situation in Germany.[60] Families acted as a conduit of information, for example, by providing the addresses of other people from the local community who were working in the same

[59] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, F Joly.
[60] Ibid., AA1216/36, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Roger B.

part of Germany, enabling those working in Germany to establish a social network after their arrival.

Residents of some barracks cooperated together in their daily tasks. Jozef van Mele wrote, "One of the Dutchmen took care of the meals. The others helped him by peeling potatoes or cutting up vegetables".[61] Cooperation between residents made an appreciable difference in daily life, but such cooperation was largely dependent on the approach of the residents and was not always the norm. In other cases, there was far less cooperation between residents. The following account illustrates how difficult things were in barracks where residents did not work together:

> As the canteen was only open from 5.00pm until 6.30pm the majority of those amongst us were forced to eat their meals cold. As there was only one stove per room, those who returned first were able to use the stove to do some cooking, while the others were not able to use it until much later.[62]

In stark contrast to the situation in barracks where residents worked together, preparing food was almost impossible if everyone cooked their own meals. It is important to remember that workers worked long hours and thus at the end of the day some workers returned home only to face lengthy delays before they could cook their evening meal.

In order to maximise production some employers operated three shifts, which invariably led to great disruption in barracks where residents worked different hours. Residents in large camps run by the DAF fared even worse because workers were employed by numerous employers and had completely different work hours. Walloon Fernand G recalled:

> The first camp where I spent my first six weeks, which was run by the DAF, was infernal. It housed workers of numerous nationalities who frequented the dozens of enterprises that were scattered across the city. No work hours matched: some departed at 5.00am or 6.00am, others worked in teams and returned at 6.00am, 7.00am, 5.00pm, 7.00pm, 11.00pm or midnight. This made it impossible to get rest.[63]

Varied work hours, combined with the disruption caused by bombing raids and long working hours, took their toll on workers who often suffered from complete exhaustion.

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[61] Letter sent by Jozef van Mele in Berlin to his family in Belgium (dated 06.07.1943) quoted in Seberechts, *Hier gaat alles zijnen gewonen gang*, 84.
[62] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Fernand G.
[63] Ibid.

Herbert's research on the dynamics of camps has emphasised the negative aspects of camp life:

> The everyday camp life that emerges is one that is dominated by the law of the jungle, with distrust, anxiety and swindling part of the daily round. And the lower they were in the racial pecking order, the worse off foreign workers were. All of these dirty dealings were often accompanied by a certain chumminess between the German camp commander and the foreign spokesperson (*Lagerälteste*) or interpreters.[64]

Police and judicial records indicate that theft was common in camps; however, Belgians seldom refer to instances of theft in their accounts. Belgians who lived in camps were generally very positive in the assessment of relations between residents and only occasionally allude to the negative aspects of camp life. Jean Be. lived in a large camp with fifty barracks that housed workers of different nationalities in Gustavsburg near Mainz. He recalled, "An atmosphere of suspicion reigned in the camp and small clans formed".[65] Taken from the bosom of their families, workers often formed close-knit groups. Belonging to a group enabled workers to insulate themselves against isolation and homesickness. Relationships formed with fellow foreign workers provided both practical and emotional support. Establishing friendships with work colleagues and other residents was vital because in times of serious illness they were often dependent on the help of others. The accounts of those who fell ill in Germany emphasise the help they received from colleagues, who in some cases accompanied them when they were sent to have medical tests, brought them food or drink when they were bed-ridden and visited them in hospital. Belgians who worked in German cities during the Second World War were under no illusions about their own mortality and the threat to their life that workers faced every day, and some worried that their families would receive no information in the event that they died in Germany. Victor B recalled he was one of a group of Belgian workers who made a fatalistic pact with each other that should one of the group die in Germany the others would pass on the news of their death to their family.[66] The friendships forged in the camps were often enduring and some former camp residents held reunions after the war, while others returned to Germany together to visit the place where they worked during the war.

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[64] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 218.
[65] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jean Be.
[66] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Victor B.

Foreign workers' camps were also a site of friction between foreigners and members of the local German communities, especially if camps had been established in sporting or recreational facilities that had been requisitioned. In Leipzig-Mockau the *Betriebslager "Sporting"* was set up in a hall belonging to a local football club. While most of the building was converted into accommodation for foreign workers, the football club retained the use of the canteen. Marcel A later recalled: It was possible for us to obtain a glass of 'light' beer, but we were not welcome there.[67] The presence of the foreign workers was clearly resented by some members of the local community who probably blamed camp residents for the loss of sporting facilities. The problems encountered at the AEG-AT foreign workers' home at Köpenickerstr. 137 in Berlin SO16 illustrate the sorts of problems encountered by residents of makeshift accommodation. In April 1943 the AEG-AT management proposed that the lease for the premises should be terminated due to continuing disputes between residents and the landlord. Company officials noted: "The available toilets were used by the residents of the home, as well as the guests of the ballroom [run by the landlord], and have therefore become the subject of disagreement between residents and Herr L". Company representatives noted that the landlord had also complained that residents of the home stood around in the reception room and suggested that the reason for this was that the landlord did not heat the building sufficiently, as required under the terms of the lease, and residents therefore sought out the reception room in order to keep warm.[68] The dispute illustrates how workers were often dependent on the good graces of those who provided their accommodation. In this case, the landlord responsible for providing heating in the workers' accommodation had no economic interest in the workers' health, and, indeed was able to exploit the situation for his own economic benefit.

It made little difference if camp residents kept their own belongings and living space scrupulously clean because the untidiness of one resident might create problems for the whole barracks. The situation in camp accommodation was exacerbated by the fact that many young men who were away from the parental home for the first time and were not used to looking after themselves. The limited possibilities for washing and drying clothes prompted some Belgians to send their

[67] Ibid., AA1216/15, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Marcel A.
[68] Landesarchiv Berlin (LAB), A Rep. 227-02: Nr.50. File note (dated 01.04.1942).

clothes back to Belgium to be washed. Roger B sent his clothes home to be washed by his mother during his first months in Halberstadt, but this practice had to stop after the postal service became increasingly unreliable. The accounts of many Belgian workers indicate that they spent a lot of their free time washing and mending their clothes. The washing facilities in camps were often quite limited, even in camps that housed western European workers. Spoerer emphasises that "the insufficient provision of sanitation facilities, which often even lacked hot water, and the lack of disinfectant materials made the infestation of the barracks with vermin unavoidable". In camps for western European workers, argues Spoerer, the infestation of barracks could often be avoided.[69] Marcel A recalled:

> There were washing facilities in the cellar of our camp, [but] you could not bathe there. Each Saturday we had the opportunity [to bathe] in the factory itself. In the beginning I felt ill at ease due to communality [of washing together]... The Germans themselves had no problems with it because it was normal. It required a little getting used to that's all.[70]

While German companies often provided bathing facilities for their workers, communal bathing came as a shock to Belgians. With no other options available residents soon adjusted to the practice of communal bathing. Living conditions in camps for western Europeans varied significantly and some reported that their barracks were infested with lice and fleas. Fernand L recalled, "I must also say that the only thing that could remedy this state of affairs was for the Fritzs to send us to be disinfected, which involved sending all of us in our birthday suits under a hose that put out a miniscule stream of tepid water". This account illustrates the indignity suffered by residents who were forced to strip naked and be hosed down alongside the fellow residents. Fernand L voiced the suspicion that the Germans took sadistic pleasure from sending the foreigners to be disinfected because they always chose the coldest time and many of his comrades were struck down by pulmonary infections during the last winter in Germany.[71] Other residents found novel ways to try to combat the problem of vermin. Marcel A recalled that there was a major problem with lice in his camp:

> The whole camp was constructed of timber. That's why we had enormous problems with lice. We were given fresh straw for our sleeping bags. That

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[69] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 138.
[70] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/15, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Marcel A.
[71] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Fernand L.

> brought a small improvement but not much. Years after my return I can still see the scars on my legs and buttocks. I had a lot of problems with [the lice], others less and some even had to be given an injection because they were allergic to the fluid [injected by] lice. If we spread petrol or white spirit on the walls and cupboards thousands [of lice] appeared. The best remedy was just to sprinkle washing powder on your sleeping bag.[72]

It is not surprising that there was a problem with vermin in many camps. Wartime shortages meant that the authorities banned the provision of bedclothes to foreign workers as early as late 1941 in some parts of Germany. Belgian Lucien B who was employed by Rheinmetall-Borsig in Henningsdorf near Berlin reported that his bedding was not changed once during his twenty-month stay in Germany.[73] Under such circumstances it would have been virtually impossible to keep vermin at bay, even in camps for western Europeans.

There was a severe shortage of clothing and shoes in Germany, especially during the last years of the war, and the German population was given priority over foreigners. Belgians were only provided with ration cards for items such as clothing and shoes if their belongings had been destroyed by bombing. While Belgian workers were often sent clothing by their families or were able to obtain new clothes when they returned to Belgium on leave, it was much more difficult to obtain clothes during the last years of the war because all leave was cancelled after the summer of 1943 and the postal service became increasingly unreliable. Records from the Deutsche Werft Company Health Insurance Fund reveal that eleven Belgian employees were afflicted with scabies – a contagious skin infection caused by mites.[74] The deplorable living conditions in camps and the lack of clean bedding and clothing allowed vermin such as mites and lice to flourish.

2. Private accommodation

The year 1942 was a turning point for the housing situation in German cities with the impact of large-scale aerial bombing and the deployment of Russians coming together to exacerbate the housing crisis. Up to the end of 1942 the number of foreign civilian workers in Germany doubled, two-thirds of whom were

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[72] Ibid., AA1216/15, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Marcel A.
[73] Ibid., AB1202, Lucien B, "*Témoignage* 1943-1945".
[74] SVG/DO, R.219/Tr.26.686, Betriebskrankenkasse der Firma Deutsche Werft Hamburg List.

Ostarbeiter.[75] The authorities embarked upon a mass construction program, which they hoped would alleviate the housing crisis and free up accommodation for bombed-out German families. Officials therefore sought to prohibit foreign workers from lodging in private accommodation. However, numerous efforts to force foreigners into camps through decrees were futile in practice.[76] In Essen, for example, Krupp replaced some 22,000 beds after damage in bombing raids between March 1943 and the end of the war, and by the end of 1942, the bed shortage was so acute that the Krupp housing department issued an appeal to German employees to take in foreign colleagues as paying lodgers.[77] Faced with a housing crisis, officials in many German cities were forced to allow western Europeans to live in private accommodation. Significant numbers of Belgians continued to live in private accommodation until the end of the war.

Official policy stipulated that Flemings could take up private accommodation in Germany. However, circumstances varied significantly across industries and regions. Workers in certain key industries were in some cases subject to more restrictive regulations with respect to housing from the outset of the *Ausländereinsatz*. On 4 September 1940 Hermann Göring ordered: "Foreign workers who were recruited by the labour administration in Belgium and northern France to work in the Ruhr mining industry must be housed in closed camp accommodation run by the DAF". More restrictive measures were put in place in the Ruhr due to the urgent need to increase Germany's coal production.[78] A letter sent to Dr Alfred Meyer, Gauleiter of North-Westphalia by the Ruhr Coalmining Regional Group on 11 September 1940 illustrates the confusion that arose and the disagreements that occurred between the different agencies that dealt with foreign workers.[79] The Group had reported that some mining workers from Belgium and northern France had left the camps against the orders of the camp manager and had taken up private accommodation, in contravention of rules that prohibited mining workers from living in private accommodation. Furthermore, some of the miners had brought their

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[75] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 117.
[76] Ibid., 119.
[77] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 214.
[78] HStAD, RW37/23, Bl.15. Letter from the Higher SS and Police Chief, Westphalia, to the heads of the regional governments in Münster, Arnsberg, Minden, Osnabrück, Düsseldorf, Cologne and Aachen outlining Göring's instructions (dated 24.10.1940).
[79] Ibid, Bl.1.

families to Germany. The Group reported this matter to the relevant police headquarters requesting that the police order the workers to return to the camps and the workers' families to return to Belgium and France. However, the police authorities refused to carry out these measures on the grounds that workers from Belgium and northern France were, according the directives they had received, to be treated the same as German workers. One member of the Group also reported:

> Labour offices were also taking the view that workers from Belgium and northern France could be housed in private accommodation... and the labour office in Essen had, for example, permitted metalworkers from other industries who were recruited in Belgium to bring their families with them and live in private accommodation.

Clearly, the industry in which one worked also affected one's treatment, with highly skilled metal workers enjoying preferential treatment. The Group warned that mining workers who were aware that workers in other industries were receiving better treatment would quite understandably become dissatisfied and demand equal treatment. The Group therefore called for instructions to be issued to all relevant authorities to ensure that workers were treated uniformly so that potential conflicts could be avoided. The case of the Ruhr miners illustrates how the treatment of foreign workers was shaped at the local level by various authorities, and German officials were not always reading from the same page. The numerous authorities that regulated the treatment of the foreign workers often issued contradictory instructions and the local authorities responsible for managing the foreign workers in their region often navigated a course between conflicting decrees. Heusler emphasises that contradictory rules, ill-defined competencies and instructions that were open to misinterpretation that emanated from the level of executive bodies and administrations were perpetuated in subordinate agencies. Unclear jurisdictions between different authorities and agencies led to regular conflicts at local level, which often hampered a sensible implementation of the *Ausländereinsatz* on a long-term basis.[80] Practice at local level varied depending on the approach of local officials and also changed over time depending on the shifting balance of power between the various local agencies overseeing foreign workers.

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[80] Heusler, *Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft*, 191-2.

The case of Belgians recruited to work in Ruhr coalmines also highlights the problems faced by German officials who worried that they risked discouraging workers from taking up labour assignments in Germany if restrictive conditions for foreign workers were introduced. Paul Walter, an official from the Office of the Four Year Plan, emphasised:

> [While] foreign workers should be housed in camps, they should receive the same remuneration and treatment as German workers. Restrictions of any kind should not be put in place, as otherwise there will be a risk that workers will no longer be prepared to accept labour assignments in Germany on a voluntary basis.[81]

These fears were realised when officials ordered mining workers from Belgium and northern France who were living in private accommodation to return to camp accommodation. The Oberhausen Police Chief reported on 19 February 1941 that single workers had been returned to camps, but some of these workers subsequently left their places of work and returned to their homeland.[82] The German recruitment campaign had its greatest successes in Belgium, especially Flanders, and in September 1941 Belgians constituted the largest single group of civilian workers from the west.[83] However, many of these workers arrived in Germany with high expectations and were sorely disappointed when their living conditions and earnings failed to meet expectations. Moreover, false and misleading information provided by recruitment officials in Belgium led many workers, quite rightly, to feel that they had been duped into signing up to work in Germany. Living and working conditions were a key cause for complaint for Belgians deployed in Germany, many of whom claimed that recruitment officials in Belgium had made promises of private accommodation, joint accommodation for married couples and families and better remuneration. In North-Westphalia Gauleiter Meyer played down workers' complaints, suggesting complaints about unfulfilled promises vis-à-vis living and working conditions or earnings made by officials in Belgium and northern France "were only made in particular cases by foreign workers who were dissatisfied with

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[81] HStAD, RW37/23, Bl.7-8.
[82] Ibid., Bl.42. The Police President in Duisburg also introduced restrictions on the freedom of workers. On 4 December 1940 the Police President advised the Higher SS and Police Chief West, Düsseldorf, that, in response to reported cases of people afflicted with sexually transmitted infections and incidences of drunkenness and disorder in workers' accommodation, he had introduced measures to restrict the freedom of Belgian, French and Polish nationals who had been recruited in occupied countries in western Europe. Ibid, Bl.13.
[83] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 98.

the situation in Germany for whatever reason and were put forward as a reason to justify their return to Belgium or northern France".[84] However, the fact that the recruitment officials in occupied territories exerted pressure on the firms to remedy abuses illustrates that many of the workers' complaints were regarded as justified.[85] Moreover, enquiries with recruitment offices in Belgium also revealed that workers had indeed been promised that their families could join them in Germany when they were recruited.[86] The issue of joint accommodation for married couples and families came to a head on 26 June 1942 when an official from Group VII wrote on behalf of the head of the Military Administration:

> Again and again complaints are put forward to the effect that married couples were promised joint accommodation when they were recruited. These couples insist upon the promise that they were allegedly given and refuse to start work when they cannot be provided with accommodation together.[87]

Married couples who signed up together at recruitment offices in Belgium sought assurances that they would be able to live together in Germany and this promise of joint accommodation was a crucial factor in their decision to accept work in Germany. In order to put an end to complaints regarding promises of joint accommodation, Military Administration officials amended the contract signed by workers taking up employment in Germany to state: "Accommodation together with the wife/husband is not possible".[88] Of course, married couples and families continued to go to Germany, but could no longer insist upon joint accommodation. In his report for December 1940, Reeder reported that the number of workers who had broken their contract was increasing, although overall only 5 percent of Belgians recruited to work in Germany had returned home.[89] These figures suggest that concerns about their living and working conditions did not have a major impact on retention rates amongst Belgians who had been recruited to work in Germany. Nevertheless, the quality of living and working conditions for foreign workers in

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[84] HStAD, RW37/23, Bl.8-9. Letter dated 12.10.1940.
[85] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 208.
[86] HStAD, RW37/23, Bl.43.
[87] SVG/DO, Documentatie Werbestelle – Originaux, Az 5000 – Az 5552 (anc. classeur 2391) (hereafter referred to as *Werbestelle* Records). Letter from RR Haftmann, Group VII, dated 22.6.1942, (distributed to recruitment offices).
[88] Ibid.
[89] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, Nr.12, 71.

Germany was a key factor in recruitment and news of false promises about living and working conditions in Germany hampered recruitment in the occupied territories.

The accommodation options that were available to Belgian workers in Germany also varied significantly depending on the city or region where they lived, and also changed during the course of the war. The attitudes of local officials also affected the housing situation of foreign workers. In Hamburg, for example, officials sought to bar all foreign workers from taking up private accommodation. In December 1941 Military Administration official Haftmann wrote to staff at the recruitment office attached to the OFK589 in Liège to advise that Karl Kaufmann, *Gauleiter* of Hamburg, "finds it unacceptable that foreign workers in Hamburg are housed in private lodgings".[90] Officials in Belgium were requested to ensure that workers who were recruited to work in Hamburg were made aware that they could not be housed in private accommodation and that the only housing available to them was in barracks. The official refers only to foreign workers, and makes no distinction between Flemings and Walloons. Reading between the lines, one gets the impression that much to the chagrin of officials in Hamburg, Belgian volunteers arrived in Germany with the expectation that they would enjoy the same rights as Germans and would be able to live in private accommodation. Herbert observes that the dictates of Nazi racial policies, and specifically the differentiated treatment of foreign workers, were not always accepted by the German populace.[91] Pre-existing ideas about foreigners persisted and many Germans probably regarded workers recruited outside Germany as foreigners without differentiating between different national groups. The official's attitude probably also reflects the concern that Germans would be denied housing due to the influx of foreigners into the city and such measures were intended to ensure that the German population continued to enjoy a privileged position over foreigners.

Another concern held by Nazi officials was that the residence of foreign workers in private accommodation made them more difficult to control and allowed criminal activities, such as black-market trading, to flourish. To what extent officials in Hamburg managed to enforce this policy is less clear. However, many Belgians

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[90] SVG/DO, *Werbestelle* Records, Az 5600 – Az 5930. Kaufmann was one of the earliest to call for deportation of Jews to release housing for bombed "Aryans".
[91] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 106.

working in Germany were able to secure private accommodation. According to a Security Service report from March 1943, some 8,500 of the approximately 35,000 foreign workers in Essen were in private lodgings in March – roughly one in every four.[92] By contrast, according to the figures of the DAF Gau Administration, between 6,000 and 8,000 of Munich's 100,000 foreign workers were resident in private accommodation in March 1945.[93] The accommodation of significant numbers of foreign workers in private accommodation was not, however, just limited to large industrial cities, but rather a substantial number of foreign workers in smaller cities and rural areas also lived in private quarters.

The German police and security services also opposed the housing of foreigners in private accommodation on the grounds that it led to a decline in work discipline. More worrying perhaps, security service officials suggested that workers who lived outside camps represented a greater threat to internal security due to the risk of sabotage and spying. Additionally, officials also warned that allowing foreign workers to live in private accommodation represented a threat to the sanctity of the German family and would lead to "moral intrusion by foreigners into the German family" and even relationships between German women and foreign men.[94] The Inspector for the Security Police and Security Service in Düsseldorf reported on 31 March 1944 that "a not insubstantial number of foreign workers do not live in the camps, but rather in private accommodation". In response to the perceived security threat these workers posed, the Inspector for the Security Police and Security Service ordered a series of raids and searches of private accommodation where foreign workers lived in April 1944.[95] While German officials stressed that workers of Germanic stock, including Flemings, should be treated the same as German workers, the approach of German officials was often underpinned by the view that foreigners were in Germany to work and must be kept under control by the German authorities. Like other foreigners, Belgians, including Flemings, were invariably still regarded

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[92] Heinz Boberach, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich, 1938-1945: die geheimen Lageberichte des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS*, 17 vols., vol. 13 (Herrsching: Pawlak, 1984), 4951. (Report Nr.367, 15.03.1943)

[93] Heusler, *Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft*, 177.

[94] Boberach, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, vol. 13, 4953-7. (Report Nr.367: 15.03.1943)

[95] Letter from the Inspector for the Security Police and Security Service to the Gestapo branches quoted in Leissa and Schröder, "Die Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen der ausländischen Arbeitskräfte in Düsseldorf," 152.

with suspicion. Many German landlords were, however, keen to let their accommodation to western Europeans because they were able to pay comparatively higher rents and often received parcels containing goods that were difficult to obtain in Germany, including chocolate, coffee, alcohol and soap.[96] Workers who lived in private accommodation enjoyed greater freedom of movement and therefore had greater opportunities to improve their living conditions. Additionally, workers who were living in private accommodation received their own ration cards and did not fall victim to the swindling that was common in camps. These workers therefore often enjoyed better food provisions.

Marcel P arrived in Dessau on 21 May 1943 and lived in a camp until a few months after his arrival when his friends told him about an opportunity to board with a German woman in nearby Mosigkau. He recalled that moving into private accommodation brought a very big improvement in his living conditions, "I had a normal bed, a furnished room, and naturally the food was better and I was better cared for".[97] While some employers advertised to find private accommodation for their workers or encouraged German employees to take in foreigners as paying lodgers, in other cases information about vacancies in private accommodation spread via word of mouth.

The availability of private accommodation in German cities made it possible for Belgian couples and families to establish temporary homes in Germany during the war. In view of fears about the perceived threat foreign workers posed for the German family, it is also likely that officials gave preference to married couples and families rather than single and unaccompanied male workers when it came to the allocation of private accommodation. Married couples and families, of course, also had the advantage of earning more than one wage and could probably more readily afford to pay private rents. Despite the difficulties of life during the war, some Belgian families were able to remain together as a family unit and home life surely provided some degree of normality for family members.

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[96] Boberach, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, Vol. 13, 4954-5. (Report Nr.367: 15.03.1943)
[97] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/17, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Marcel P.

3. Food provision

Food provision was a high priority for the Nazi regime and officials were determined to avoid a repeat of the Turnip Winter of 1916/1917 and its consequences for the war effort. The regime managed to maintain adequate food provision for the needs of the German population almost until the end of the Second World War, in part because of the plunder of occupied territories. The German population therefore enjoyed relatively good food provisions until the final stages of the war, although this did not stop people grumbling incessantly about provisioning. The comparatively good food provision of the German population came at the expense of foreign workers who were deployed in Germany.[98] One worker later described the food provision as "too much to die, too little to live".[99] Most Belgians were accommodated in camps and fed in works and camp canteens. While foreign civilians, excluding *Ostarbeiter,* were to receive the same rations as German civilians, according to the official guidelines issued in October 1943, workers who were fed in camps were not able to check their rations. This system was therefore open to abuse. Corruption was endemic and in many cases camp commanders or personnel siphoned off food designated for foreign workers.[100] Belgians who lived outside the camps and those who lived in camps where residents were not catered for were issued with ration cards and were therefore generally better off than those living in camps. These workers were able to purchase foodstuffs from shops and could also eat in restaurants.

Although there was some variation in the food provisions from camp to camp, the accounts of Belgian workers consistently emphasise the inadequacy and poor quality of the rations they received. Michel D noted that the food was very bad. In the mornings there was coffee without sugar or milk, bread was allotted once per day, at lunchtime they received soup consisting of a little meat and vegetables. He noted that during his time in Germany he suffered from open wounds on his feet that

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[98] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 123.
[99] Stichting Holländerei, ed., *Niederländer und Flamen in Berlin*, 183.
[100] Herbert emphasises that food passed through many hands along the supply chain on its way from the wholesale markets to the camps and much was pilfered by Germans, who in some cases took the view that giving any food at all to the Russians was just sentimental nonsense. Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 212.

would not heal, which the doctor ascribed to a lack of fats in his diet.[101] Frans S gave a similar account: "The food was inedible and insufficient, it was a sort of watery soup. This resulted in many illnesses due to general [physical] weakness... we were served coloured water under the guise of coffee accompanied by bread that was inedible".[102] Joseph C emphasised that "the food was insufficient for completing twelve hours intense labour under the surveillance of guards".[103] The food rations they received were insufficient to meet their daily calorific requirements, especially for Belgians employed in heavy labour. Some Belgians reported that they lost substantial weight due to their poor diet. Hermann D reported: "My weight was seventy-five kilograms before my departure, ten months later it was forty-five kilograms".[104] One exception was Roger B who gained weight in the first months after his deportation. Roger B received packages containing food and tobacco from his family in Belgium. As a non-smoker, Roger B exchanged his tobacco with other workers for food and was therefore able to supplement his allotted rations. Shortages meant tobacco was an important commodity in wartime Germany and many Belgians were able to supplement their rations or earn extra money by bartering or selling tobacco they received from home.[105] Belgians also received various foodstuffs in packages from home such as gingerbread, biscuits, fruit conserves, macaroni, pudding mixtures, porridge, dried meats and canned sardines. Even perishable goods such as butter, cheese and sausage were sent to Germany with Belgians who were returning from leave. For Belgians working in Germany, the liberation of Belgium in September 1944 had a levelling effect. Belgians no longer received packages from home and this development in the war therefore put an end to the packages that had done a lot to ensure the comparatively privileged position of Belgian workers. Plagued by hunger, particularly as the war continued, some Belgians resorted to a range of methods to obtain additional food. A most common method was petty theft from other camp residents. Postal and railway workers stole packages. Some Belgians robbed shops or stole vegetables and even chickens from local Germans. One Belgian teenager landed himself in prison after he was caught trapping rabbits, a

[101] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/9, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Michel D.
[102] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Frans S.
[103] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Joseph C.
[104] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Hermann D.
[105] Ibid., AA1216/36, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Roger B.

privilege that was presumably reserved for Germans. A particularly risky option was plundering German homes or businesses in the wake of bombing raids, which was deemed very detrimental to the morale of the German population and could lead to a death sentence if one was caught.

4. Health

As we have already seen, workers recruited in Belgium were subject to a medical examination to assess their suitability before their labour assignment in Germany was confirmed. However, these medical examinations left much to be desired and in many cases workers suffering from infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis, were cleared for employment in Germany. It is unclear whether Belgian workers were consistently examined again upon their arrival in Germany. Jean B who was conscripted and worked in Stuttgart recalled:

> The following morning we were taken to attend an appointment with a doctor, a military man, and the guy who was ahead of me, a young man of around twenty years of age who gave the appearance of being in good health, was told by the doctor that he could return to Belgium. My comrade was suffering from tuberculosis, which they completely ignored. We returned to our lodgings. The young man was completely distraught. We tried to comfort him and told him, on the one hand, that he would have the chance to return home and, on the other hand, the illness that he was suffering from could now be cured very easily.[106]

This observation raises serious questions about the adequacy of the medical examinations that were carried out upon the arrival of foreign workers in Germany. Certainly few Belgians make reference to medical examinations that were carried out upon their arrival and Belgians were frequently transferred directly to their employer. Paradoxically, while pejorative stereotypes encouraged the notion that *Ostarbeiter* were afflicted with infectious diseases, inadequate medical examinations, both in Belgium and upon the workers' arrival in Germany, meant that Belgians with infectious diseases were allowed to work in Germany. In spite of the concerns about the public health risk posed by foreign workers, anecdotal evidence indicates that there was a great deal of complacency.

The medical care of foreign workers in Germany was in reality a two-class system, although all civilian workers, with the exception of *Ostarbeiter*, were

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[106] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jean B.

obliged to pay for social security and were therefore formally covered by medical health insurance.[107] In principle, the level of medical care provided to foreign workers, with the exception of Poles and *Ostarbeiter*, should not have been worse than that provided to German patients. However, officials were only required to hospitalise a foreign worker in cases where there was a threat that infection would spread. The treatment or hospitalisation of sick foreign workers was normally left to the discretion of the relevant health authorities. Individual cases were determined by the health insurance fund that was responsible for the company that employed the foreign worker, i.e. the company, regional or state health insurance fund.[108] Even in cases where camp doctors believed that a worker was seriously ill they might not necessarily order time off work, treatment or hospitalisation. Medical doctors were often employed in larger camps and workplaces, but these doctors did not want to interfere, as decisions about treatment and hospitalisation were made by the doctors employed by the insurance funds. Although special visiting hours were held by company doctors in some large companies, most company doctors did not feel responsible for the treatment of sick forced workers because the doctors employed by health insurance funds held responsibility for diagnoses with respect to foreign civilians. The company doctor employed by Gebrüder Böhler & Co in Düsseldorf-Heerdt reported: "I did not want to give a diagnosis because the majority of foreign civilian workers were treated by the doctors appointed by the health insurance funds, especially in cases of illnesses that affected their fitness for work".[109] The direct cost of medical treatment and hospitalisation was borne by insurance funds and these did not always approve treatment or hospitalisation. Of course, insurance funds also had a financial interest in returning employees to work rather than pay them for periods of incapacity. Moreover, cases of illness were often regarded with suspicion, and in some instances the advice of doctors was disregarded. Even in cases where a camp doctor recommended that a worker was unfit for work, the employer might oppose the granting of leave.

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[107] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 139. *Ostarbeiter* were specifically excluded from the regulations of the Reich health insurance system and therefore had no health insurance. They were first required to pay for social security in April 1944.

[108] Larger concerns, both in the state and private sector, often ran insurance funds for employees.

[109] Letter from the Gebrüder Böhler & Co AG Edelstahlwerk in Düsseldorf-Heerdt to the inspectorate in Mönchengladbach regarding medical provisions for the company's *Gemeinschaftslager* (dated 14.11.1942) quoted in Sparing, "Die medizinische Behandlung von Zwangsarbeitern," 277.

Insurance funds often ordered workers to return home to avoid the cost of treating them. Illness was therefore the principal avenue for foreign workers to end their employment in Germany and many workers pretended to be ill in order to escape home. Foreign workers, especially self-confident western Europeans, were often able to exploit the system in order to avoid work for a few days or even weeks.[110] Workers also frequently pretended to be sick in order to waste time and avoid work. Shortages of medical staff often meant that seeing the doctor involved a long wait and enabled workers to avoid work while they waited. Officials introduced some key measures to combat the increasing number of workers registering as sick. Foreign workers were not permitted to choose their own doctor, but rather employees were obliged to attend doctors who were prescribed by the health insurance fund. These measures were introduced to limit the access of foreign workers to medical doctors who were in short supply in wartime Germany and, above all, as a means of reducing the number of workers who were registered as sick. Other measures that were introduced included the establishment of sick bays in camps. The staff that oversaw sick bays were charged with the responsibility of hampering workers' efforts to avoid work. Camp personnel, company officials and medical doctors therefore often treated claims of ill health with scepticism because they were well aware that many workers feigned illness.

By contrast with traditional medicine and its focus on returning the patient to full health, the medical care provided to the burgeoning number of foreigners working in the Reich was focussed solely upon the restoration of the patient's capacity to work. A decisive factor in determining whether a worker would receive treatment or would be sent home was the length of time their recovery was likely to take. From October 1941 foreign workers who fell ill or had a mental breakdown were sent to hospital and were immediately repatriated to their home countries if they were not expected to recover within six weeks. In cases where a convalescence period of more than three weeks was expected the health insurance fund generally refused to pay for treatment and ordered the worker's return to their homeland. However, after 1943 increasing demands on transport networks, the negative impact repatriation was having on voluntary labour recruitment in occupied territories and

[110] Heusler, *Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft*, 347.

the advance of the Red Army meant it was no longer feasible to send foreign workers home. This time limit was extended to six weeks in February 1944 due to severe labour shortages. In the case of Belgian women who fell pregnant, they were permitted to return home to have their child and were usually able to avoid returning to Germany after the birth of their child. Belgian women who remained in Germany to have their child, for social or economic reasons, were able to give birth in German hospitals and generally remained in hospital for around ten days after the birth.

An ever increasing number of foreign workers were unfit for work and the cost of maintaining sick foreign workers and overcrowding in German hospitals prompted officials to seek a radical solution to this problem. Officials in Brunswick, for example, began to discuss "euthanasia" as a solution to the problem of foreign workers afflicted by tuberculosis as early as June 1943.[111] In July 1944 Sauckel arrived at the decision to "treat" foreign workers who had been suffering from illness on a long-term basis in mental institutions and nursing homes. This so-called "treatment" was a euphemism for the Nazi euthanasia program and treatment signalled the commencement of a killing program wherby foreign workers whose health showed little or no prosect of improving would be killed.[112] On 6 September 1944, the Reich Interior Ministry (RMdI) instructed all regional governments that *Ostarbeiter* unable to work due to "mental illness" must be transferred to specific regional hospitals.[113] Those who were not expected to recover within six weeks were sent to one of eleven "collection centres" where they were killed. While the RMdI directive referred to "mentally ill" foreign workers, foreign workers afflicted with illnesses such as tuberculosis were often labelled "mentally ill" to justify their murder under the auspices of the euthanasia program. The first killings took place at the end of July or early August 1944. This group was made up of foreign nationals from Russia and Poland, and included fourteen women and two young children.[114] This group was killed within hours of their arrival at the Hadamar State Mental

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[111] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 141.
[112] Ibid., 141-2. There were 41,000 foreign workers were classified as suffering from a long-term illness in December 1944.
[113] Henry Friedlander, *The origins of Nazi genocide: from euthanasia to the final solution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 161.
[114] Earl W Kintner, ed., *The Hadamar Trial*, vol. 4, War Crimes Trials (London; Edinburgh; Glasgow: William Hodge and Company, Ltd, 1949), 19.

Hospital and Nursing Home in Hesse.[115] How many foreigners suffering from long-term incapacity were killed in such a manner is unknown.[116] Health insurance funds also established "collection camps" for sick *Ostarbeiter* who showed no prospect of recovering within eight weeks. These camps were characterised by routine neglect and many residents perished.

Foreign workers were conscious of the reality that the Nazi regime viewed the lives of those who could no longer work as expendable. Rumours circulated amongst foreign workers about the fate of those who became seriously ill:

> In the meantime, two other deportees who went to the doctor with me and complained of a sore throat and the doctor did not take them seriously... They took them to hospital in Esslingen and I did not hear any news about them. And another one who complained about stomach pains went the same way and we no longer heard anything about him. One said that deportees at that hospital who took too long to recover were exterminated.[117]

Nazi utilitarian ideals engendered fear amongst foreign workers who worried that their life might come under threat the moment they became seriously ill and could no longer perform productive work. Foreign workers harboured grave fears for colleagues who were never seen again after they went to hospital. Anxiety about the murder of sick foreigners added a whole new dimension to concerns foreign workers might have about going to hospital in a foreign land. While the workers' suspicions about the murder of sick foreign workers were based on rumour and there was little evidence to confirm that western Europeans were killed, sadly these rumours and fears were not completely unfounded.

The German health insurance funds continued to pay for medical costs and sickness benefits in the case of Belgians who returned home for medical treatment. Payments for Belgians who had been working in Germany were overseen by the Central German Health Insurance Fund for Belgium and Northern France, which recouped costs from the German health insurance funds. However, individual cases show that significant delays could leave sick workers without benefits and prompted

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[115] While staff at the institution later claimed that this group of patients were afflicted with lung diseases and were terminally ill, the six autopsies conducted by Major Herman Bolker as part of the International Military Tribunal war crimes investigation call this claim into question. Ibid., 62.
[116] There is no evidence to suggest that Belgians fell victim to such killings. Spoerer argues that generally only sick foreign workers who were considered politically "dangerous" were killed as part of the euthanasia program, while others were simply transferred to camps for sick patients. Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 142.
[117] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jean B.

some to return to work in Germany before they had fully recovered. Gabriel B was diagnosed with tuberculosis and pleurisy in May 1942 and sent home to Belgium. He was incapacitated for an extended period and attended numerous appointments with the doctor employed by the Military Administration to assess workers. On 2 September 1942 an official from the Union of Manual Workers and White-collar Workers intervened in the case writing to the Central German Health Insurance Fund for Belgium and Northern France to advise that Gabriel B had not received any payments and to request that they resolve the matter as soon as possible. Gabriel B wrote to his employer, the Firma Ludwig Specht, Berlin-Wilmersdorf, on 5 November 1942 to request permission to resume his job. The recruitment office in Dendermonde approved Gabriel B's return to Germany on 13 November 1942. Gabriel B died in Berlin on 29 January 1944.[118] Workers who returned to Belgium due to ill health were required to attend regular appointments with the doctors appointed by the Military Administration. The doctors could recommend that the worker was no longer fit for employment in Germany, order their return to Germany if they had recovered or order the worker to attend further check-ups if they had not yet returned to full health.

According to eye-witness accounts, foreign workers who were admitted to hospital generally received good treatment. Walloon François V sustained an eye injury as a result of a workplace accident when he was working for the Reichswerke Hermann Göring in Hallendorf, near Brunswick. François V was admitted to a private clinic for an eye operation. He recalled:

> I remained at this private clinic for more than a month for treatment, I think that I was the only foreigner. I was well looked after, but nothing more: not a short note of encouragement, nothing. I experienced quite painful moments [during my convalescence]. I did not know what was going to become of me and had no news of my family. Fortunately, I often had visits from fellow workers. It was very encouraging and very nice because I must say you could not speak of bilingualism at that time.[119]

While François V was given an operation on his injured eye and received good treatment, he lost the sight in the eye. This case illustrates that injured Belgians generally received the treatment necessary to aid their recovery. The account also touches on the psychological aspects of the experience of hospitalisation in a foreign

[118] SVG/DO, D ad 4247/374508 & SDR 134375.
[119] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, François V.

country. As the only foreigner at the clinic and without a good command of the German language, François V was socially isolated and felt afraid. This isolation was compounded by the fact that he did not receive any news from home. The importance of a network of friends for deportees is clearly illustrated by this account. After his convalescence François V returned to work; however, upon returning to Belgium on leave, he managed to avoid returning to Germany by getting a doctor to declare that he was incapable of work due to his eye injury. Another Belgian similarly emphasised that he received good medical treatment: "I also recognise that specialist physicians of Hagen... and the personnel of the hospitals never made any distinction between Germans and hard-working deportees. They always showed devotion and conscientiousness".[120] These cases illustrate that sick and injured Belgian workers, including Walloons, were treated in German hospitals and in many cases received medical treatment on a par with that accorded to German citizens.

The records of the Deutsche Werft Company Health Insurance Fund provide a useful basis for examining the health problems faced by Belgians who worked in Germany during Second World War, most of whom were employed in German industry.[121] The majority of the 606 Belgians employed by shipbuilding company Deutsche Werft were male, with a small number of female employees who were mainly employed as cleaning staff or in the company canteen. The majority of the company's Belgian employees came from Flanders, with many recruited in the port city of Antwerp where the company established a training centre.[122] The key limitation of this data is that it does not indicate whether the period of illness recorded correlates directly with any period of incapacity or whether the dates of the illness simply refer to the period in which the worker received treatment for a medical problem. Moreover, while the date each worker commenced employment with Deutsche Werft is available, the data source does not indicate the date when their employment with the company ceased. Thus, it is not possible to calculate the average number of sick days per year for each worker or the retinue as a whole.

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[120] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, F Joly.
[121] SVG/DO, R.219/Tr.26.686, Betriebskrankenkasse der Firma Deutsche Werft Hamburg.
[122] By 31 December 1942, 208 Belgians trained at the Deutsche Werft Hamburg training centre in Antwerp were deployed in Germany. Haupt, "Der 'Arbeitseinsatz' der belgischen Bevölkerung", 204.

Nevertheless, the data can be used to analyse the sorts of medical problems Belgians suffered in Germany and worker health generally.

Analysis of the Deutsche Werft Health Insurance Fund records clearly illustrates that the number of workers who suffered from medical illnesses steadily increased during the war (see Figures 1, 2 and 3 on pages 120-22). This trend may, in part, result from an overall increase in the number of Belgians employed by Deutsche Werft. Nevertheless, the trend points towards worsening worker health as the war continued. Appendix 5 on page 290 provides a breakdown of the reported cases of medical illness amongst Belgian employees. Significant numbers of Belgians suffered from colds, influenza, pneumonia and bronchitis, particularly in the winter of 1944/1945 when the number of cases peaked. A number of Belgians suffered from furuncles, boils and abscesses – medical complaints that were most likely an outcome of poor hygiene. Eleven workers also suffered from scabies, another medical complaint linked to poor hygiene. Other common medical problems experienced by Belgian employees are consistent with the types of injuries sustained in the workplace by those employed in heavy industry, including contusions to various parts of the body, burns, fractures, cuts and foreign bodies lodged in the eye. Looking more closely at specific cases, one notices that some Belgian workers suffered repeated bouts of illness during their time in Germany, with some workers experiencing as many as fourteen health problems. Despite repeated bouts of illness these workers continued working in Germany. Another notable point is that workers afflicted with tuberculosis were not necessarily sent home and some continued to work in Germany despite the risk to public health.

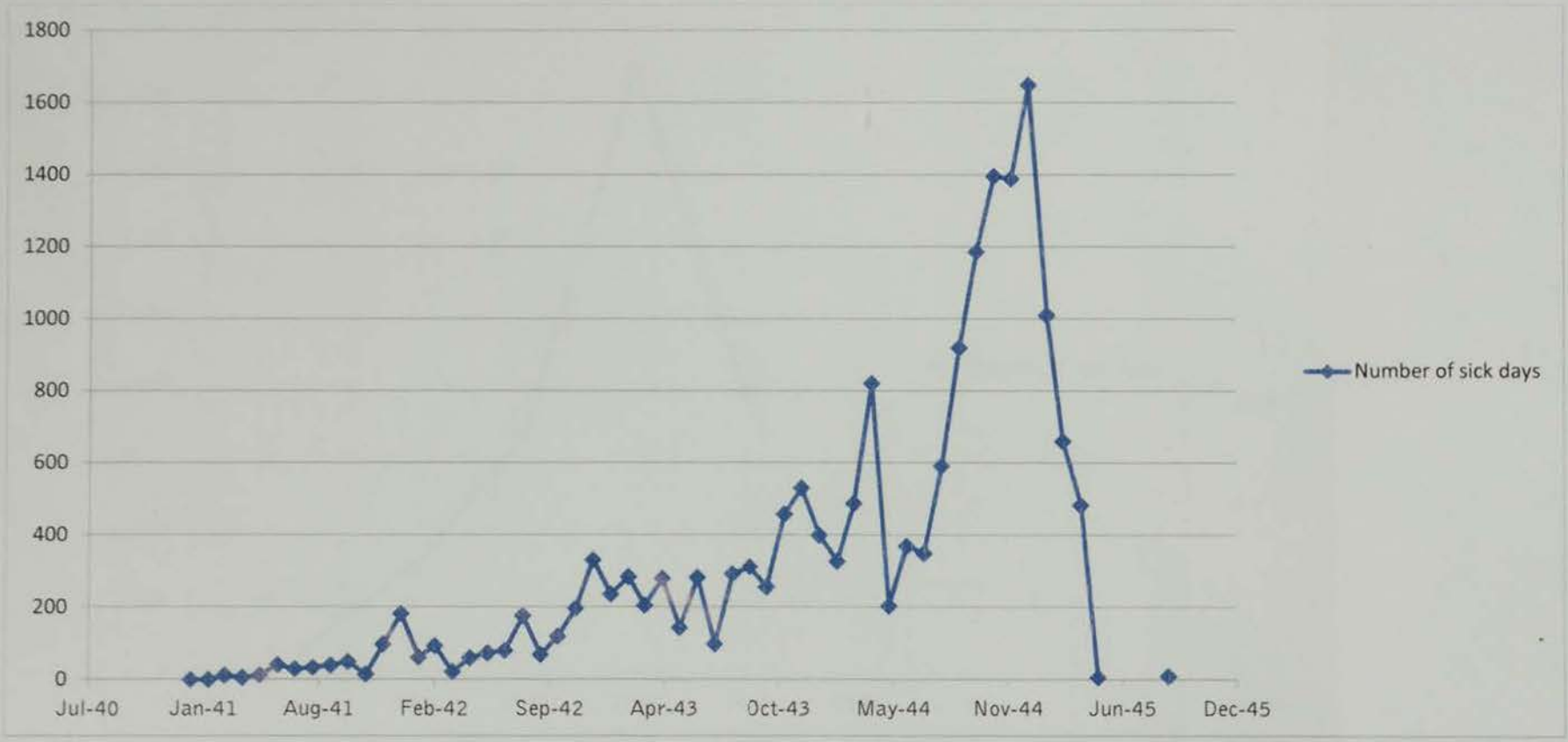
Belgians generally received good medical treatment. However, they often suffered from multiple ailments during their time in Germany and there are indications that the deployment in Germany took a toll on their health in the long term. Marcel V reported: "I returned with chronic bronchitis contracted during my deportation and after that time I have suffered from angina. It is already five years since I last worked and the health insurance company doctor has declared that I am incapable of working [due to ill health]".[123] Marcel A also pointed to the long-term effects of deportation on the health of deportees. At the reunion of Belgian deportees

[123] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Marcel V.

held fifteen years after the end of the war, he observed that a number of his contemporaries from the *Betriebslager "Sporting"* in Leipzig had already died either in Germany or during the intervening years.[124]

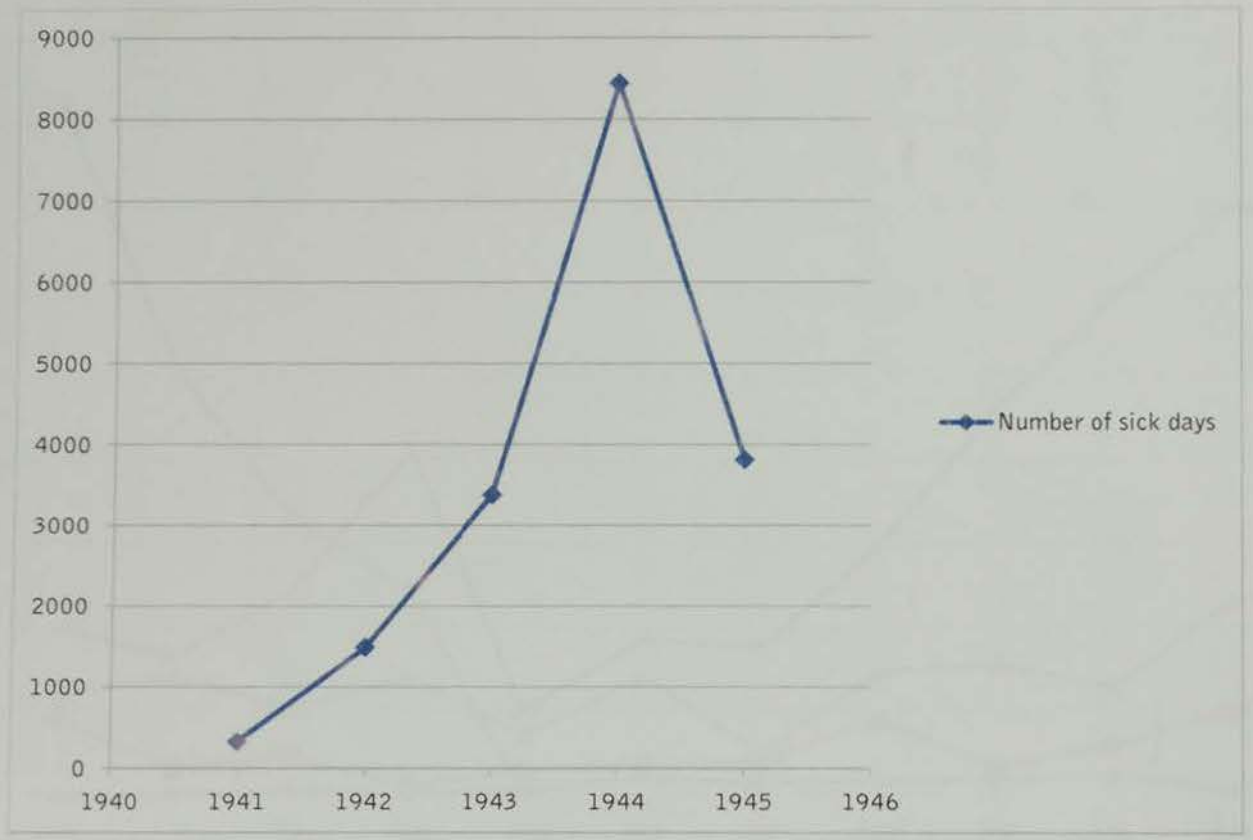
[124] Ibid., AA1216/15, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Marcel A.

Figure 1: Deutsche Werft Hamburg, number of worker sick days (Belgian employees), by month



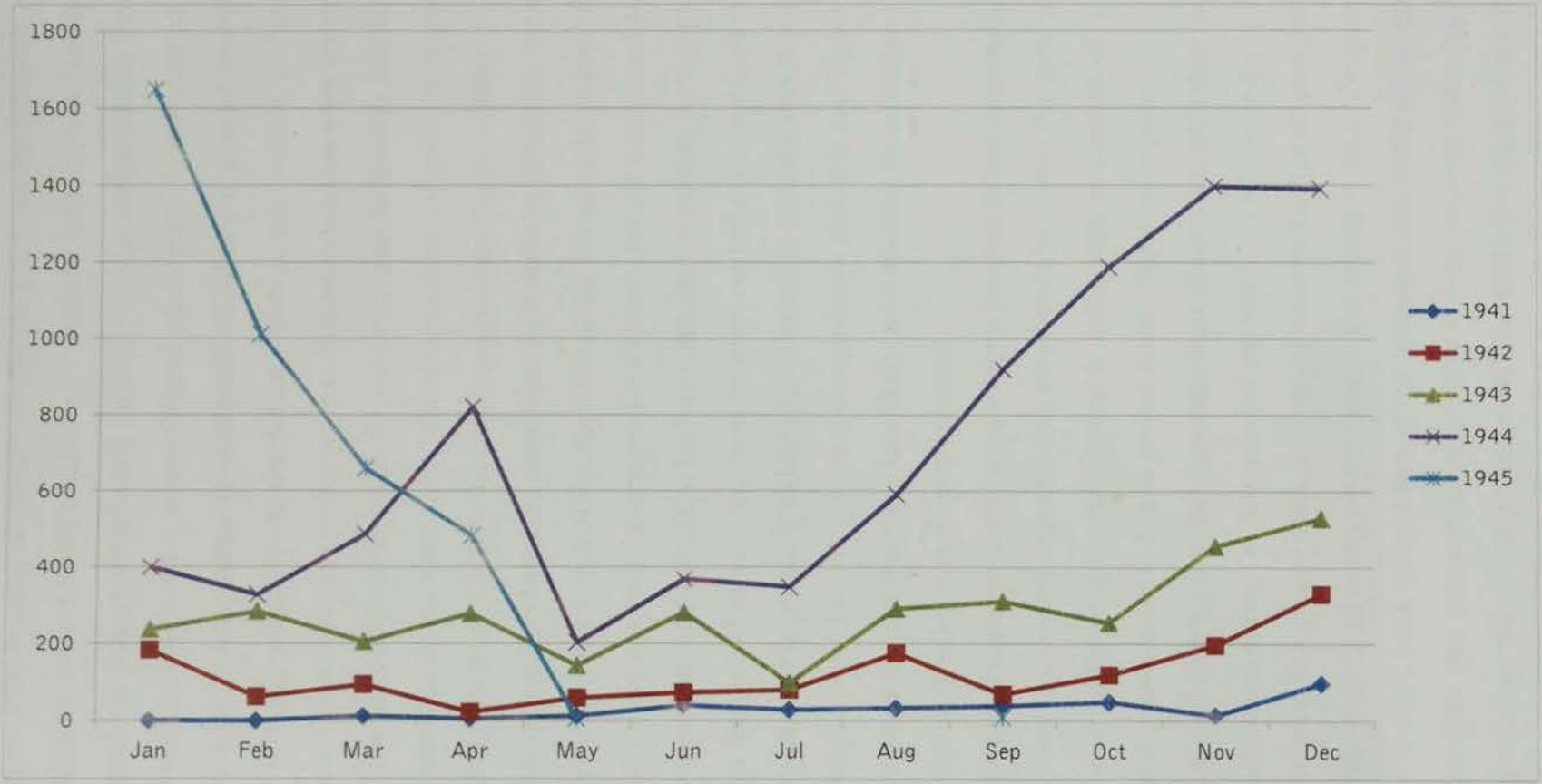
Source: Author's statistics based on the company health insurance fund records for the Firma Deutsche Werft Hamburg: SVG/DO, R.219/Tr.26.686.

Figure 2: Deutsche Werft Hamburg number of worker sick days (Belgian employees), by year



Source: Author's statistics based on the company health insurance fund records for the Firma Deutsche Werft Hamburg: SVG/DO, R.219/Tr.26.686.

Figure 3: Deutsche Werft Hamburg, Number of worker sick days (Belgian employees)



Source: Author's statistics based on the company health insurance fund records for the Firma Deutsche Werft Hamburg: SVG/DO, R.219/Tr.26.686.

5. Conclusions

The examination of the housing of Belgian workers in Germany has revealed significant variations in their living conditions. Variations in the type of buildings used to accommodate foreign workers and the size of camps meant that the living conditions of workers who lived in camps differed enormously. Local conditions, and the approach of the local authorities and camp management, also led to wide differences in foreign workers' living conditions – both across Germany and even within the same region or city. In theory western European workers were better provided for than *Ostarbeiter* in terms of the provisions and furnishings supplied in barracks accommodation; however, local officials exercised a significant degree of discretion and did not always follow the guidelines provided by the central authorities. Belgian workers benefited most from their status as privileged western Europeans during the early stages of the war. One of the key advantages enjoyed by Belgians, mainly Flemings, was the opportunity to live in private accommodation. Belgians who were fortunate enough to find accommodation outside the camps enjoyed greater freedom of movement, more personal control over their food rations, greater privacy, and the opportunity to live with relatives as a family unit in some cases. Most Belgians who lived in private accommodation probably had higher standard accommodation and were also less likely to be affected by infectious diseases and vermin which plagued camp residents.

The privileged status bestowed upon western Europeans was empowering. Belgians who went to Germany expected that they would be treated the same as Germans and asserted their rights when it came to issues such as freedom of movement and the entitlement to live in private accommodation or joint accommodation with their spouse. Belgians who were dissatisfied with their living and working conditions during the first years of the war often left Germany at the end of their contract. The greater rights enjoyed by western Europeans also gave them greater self-confidence to exploit the system. For example, many Belgians feigned illness to avoid work without fear of the consequences, while others attended Belgian doctors when they returned home on leave in order to avoid returning to Germany. Nevertheless, the privileged treatment of western Europeans was not necessarily always assured, particularly during the latter stages of the war when

shortages of food, fuel, clothing, shoes and bedding affected all foreign workers. Moreover, Belgian conscripts arrived in Germany at a time when the housing situation was worsening and Belgians, the majority of whom lived in cities, often had very poor living conditions in Germany. The exigencies of war and the need to optimise economic production eroded Nazi racial ideology and forced Nazi officials to improve the treatment of *Ostarbeiter* in order to increase productivity. Strict differentiation was no longer maintained and distinctions between different nationalities or types of workers began to melt away as the war progressed. Belgians benefited from packages from home, which provided a wide range of foodstuffs, as well as items such as clothing, shoes and tobacco to supplement their rations. However, the suspension of leave in the summer of 1943 and then the liberation of Belgium in September 1944 meant that Belgians no longer obtained foodstuffs and other items from home and these developments therefore resulted in a worsening of the position of Belgian workers. Health insurance records also show a steady increase in the number of Belgian workers suffering from medical illnesses towards the end of the war, indicating that the health of Belgians deteriorated as the war continued. The gap between the living conditions of eastern and western European workers narrowed towards the end of Second World War.

CHAPTER THREE: The Working Conditions of Belgian Workers in Germany

The Nazis' imperialist policies necessitated the deployment of foreign workers on a massive and unprecedented scale. Foreigners were deployed in all corners of Germany from the smallest rural farms to large factories in Germany's industrial heartland. An army of foreigners was imported to fill the gap in the labour force left by the call-up of German workers to the armed forces. The German economy became increasingly dependent on foreign labour. In September 1944 foreign workers represented 26 percent of Germany's workforce.[1] This figure was even higher in industry where 29 percent of the labour force was foreign.[2] The overwhelming majority of the foreigners deployed in Germany during the war came from eastern Europe, chiefly from Poland and the USSR, while a smaller number came from western Europe.

Most Belgians were deployed in industrial centres, such as the Ruhr region, Berlin, Leipzig, Hamburg, Dessau and Magdeburg. Almost three in four Belgians were employed in industry, while others were employed in construction and service industries (see Appendix 6 on page 294). The recruitment campaign in Belgium had led to the deployment of many skilled workers who were in high demand in German industry. According to Reeder a total of 280,992 Belgians had been recruited to work in Germany by March 1942, including 89,268 metal workers.[3] In addition, Belgians who were semi-skilled, unskilled or had trained in professions for which there was less demand in Belgium were also recruited. Employment in Germany offered these workers the opportunity to gain new skills and experience. Many of those recruited in the first wave of conscriptions from November 1942 until early 1943 were conscripted through their employer's personnel list and fulfilled the demands for skilled workers. The management at Siemens welcomed the influx of conscripts not least because "conscripted workers would be pulled from their jobs in which they

[1] Spoerer and Fleischhacker, "Forced Labourers in Nazi Germany," 172.
[2] Stephenson, "Triangle: Foreign Workers, German Civilians, and the Nazi Regime," 341.
[3] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Allgemeine Übersicht für die Zeit 01.12.1941–15.3.1942*, 16.

had worked until their conscription, [and] are therefore not work shy elements, like those who have so often been assigned to us".[4] While a significant proportion of Belgian workers were employed by large industrial concerns, their experiences vary a great deal. The accounts of Belgian workers add weight to the argument that there were great variations in the treatment foreigners received in Germany, depending on the approach adopted by their employer. Many German employers adopted a pragmatic approach when dealing with western Europeans in order to limit conflict in the workplace and lost productivity. Many German factories were modern and characterised by an enlightened approach to the management of workers. Whatever the circumstances of their recruitment, many Belgians had positive experiences working in German factories.

1. Transport and arrival in Germany

Most Belgian workers were transported to Germany via Herbesthal and the reception camp just across the German-Belgian border in Aachen, while a smaller number were transported directly to the area of Germany where they had been assigned to work.[5] Some of those who were assigned jobs in the Ruhr were, for example, collected directly from the transit camp in Aachen and transported to their places of work by truck. The period of time spent at the transit camp varied from a brief stop to a couple of days. Workers who stayed for longer periods of time were fed and accommodated in a requisitioned school a short distance from the station before they continued their journey. Worker transport trains often made a number of stops with workers disembarking at locations across Germany.

The stop at the transit camp in Aachen and in other places en route provided an opportunity for some workers to destroy their transfer papers and board trains destined for other parts of Germany in order to remain with friends, join friends or relatives who were working in another part of Germany, or simply to avoid their assigned job. Such cases caused consternation for labour administrators, but employers were generally only too happy to accept stray workers. Indeed, Germany's labour shortage was so severe that some German employers resorted to employing

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[4] Tilla Siegel, "Die Doppelte Rationalisierung des 'Ausländereinsatzes' bei Siemens," *Internationale Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der Deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* 27, no. 1 (1991): 18.

[5] This reception camp was established in early 1941 in response to the increasing problem of workers who returned home illegally.

agents to lure workers from worker transport trains. On 22 July 1943 the President of the Westphalia State labour office reported that he had recently received numerous reports that "during stops at train stations in the Rhineland 'wild recruiters' are trying to convince workers on worker transports destined for my region to disembark and take up employment with companies other than those to which they have been assigned".[6] It was reported that some agents even boarded trains after they arrived in Germany. Illegal recruiters appealed to workers with promises of higher wages and the granting of leave to return home after just six weeks.[7] Promises such as early leave were clearly dubious and were almost certainly never kept. Workers who destroyed their transfer papers or disembarked before they reached their final destination risked being arrested as a suspected contract breaker, especially in border areas, as their lack of papers might lead officials to assume that they were trying to return home illegally.

New recruits arriving at their destinations after a long train journey were generally transferred to reception camps that were established across Germany. On 9 December 1941 the Reich Labour Minister, Franz Seldte, ordered the presidents of regional Labour Offices to establish a network of transit camps in preparation for the intensification of the *Ausländereinsatz*. In the months that followed forty-six transit camps were set up across the Reich. Workers who had already been assigned to a specific employer were sometimes met by company officials upon arrival and escorted directly to their accommodation. Workers who were yet to be allocated to an employer generally remained at reception camps until they were assigned a job or completed retraining. Labour office staff interviewed workers to assess their job skills and prospective employers visited reception camps to select workers. Marcel De recalled that he spent one night in a camp in Cologne: "The following day we were assigned to a factory, like slaves who are sold by a trader".[8] Another worker similarly observed: "We were assembled according to our trade and the German bosses made their selection (a bit like at a market for livestock)".[9] For recruits who had been conscripted and forced to leave their homes and loved ones, labour selections at reception camps represented a further indignity. While selections did

[6] HStAD, RW37/23, Bl.21. Letter of the President of the Westphalia State Labour Office, Dortmund, to the Higher SS and Police Chief West, Düsseldorf (dated 22.07.1943).
[7] Normally married workers were entitled to leave after six months continuous employment in Germany and unmarried workers after twelve months employment in Germany.
[8] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Marcel De.
[9] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, René V.

not bear any of the hallmarks of the selections that occurred in concentration camps, workers clearly found the methods used to allocate workers demoralising and inevitably drew comparisons between their own treatment and the purchase and sale of animals or slaves. Such experiences impressed upon new recruits their loss of employment rights and the coercive nature of their employment in Germany, reinforcing their subordinate position as foreigners in Germany.

2. The allocation of labour assignments

In Belgium prospective recruits attended recruitment offices where officials gathered information regarding their trade/profession, employer and their current job. This information was then used to match their skills with suitable jobs in Germany and identify workers whose skills were desperately needed in Germany. Workers with desirable skills and experience, such as metal workers, electricians and technical draughtsmen, were generally assigned jobs that matched their existing skills. For workers with skills for which there was less demand, on the other hand, the job assigned to them was determined by the available vacancies and very often meant they were assigned a semi-skilled or unskilled job that did not match their existing job skills. The insatiable demand for workers in the war industries meant that many Belgians, including a significant proportion of women, were deployed in munitions factories and other industrial concerns. Many Belgian men were also assigned low-skilled jobs in construction and mining.

During the first years of the German occupation Belgian recruits often volunteered to go to Germany because they were unable to find work in Belgium. These workers often had skills for which there was less demand and were therefore deployed in lower-skilled jobs and were invariably paid lower wages.[10] A closer examination of the jobs assigned to Belgians in Germany indicates that many Belgians were assigned semi-skilled or unskilled jobs. Appendix 7A on page 295 and Appendix 7B on page 316 show that many Belgian workers were assigned labour contracts as unskilled workers, trainees and apprentices. In the first months following the introduction of conscription labour administrators combed Belgian workplaces

[10] Ibid., BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.10. According to Reeder's Activity Report for September 1940, unemployed workers who had previously trained in a different industry were to be classified as "unskilled" workers for the purposes of the recruitment office's registration system and unemployment statistics. The classification of many unemployed workers who could not find work in their profession as unskilled workers clearly increased the likelihood that they would be assigned low-skilled jobs that paid lower wages.

for skilled workers desperately needed in German industry. Rather than cooperate with recruitment officials, some skilled workers lied about their previous work experience and job skills due to fears that employment in German industrial centres would put them at greater risk of bombing. However, in most cases such deception was futile, as workers were conscripted irrespective of their skills and most Belgians were deployed in German cities. Moreover, by playing down their skills conscripts increased the likelihood that they would be assigned a job that was not commensurate with their skills and experience. The massive undertaking of assigning jobs to thousands of workers probably meant that for the sake of expediency in some instances even skilled workers were assigned jobs that did not reflect their existing skills and experience. Western Europeans often complained that they were assigned unsuitable jobs.[11] A metal worker from Charleroi recalled: "There were five of us from the factory [who went to Germany], three of us worked in the rolling mill and two others in a garage. Only one of us practised their trade".[12] Alfons L similarly recalled: "Each of us had to undertake a different job – it was a question of adjusting. The first days were lost, but we had to quickly adjust".[13] New recruits were under pressure from employers to get up to speed with their new jobs as quickly as possible. Workers themselves had to learn to be flexible and those who worked in Germany throughout Belgium's occupation were often employed in different jobs across Germany. Crucially, however, workers were paid according to skill level and thus those in unskilled jobs earned lower wages.

Once a worker was assigned to an employer it was generally quite difficult to change jobs. According to the advice provided in the "*De Post Onder Ons*" section of the DAF's Flemish-language newspaper *De Vlaamsche Post*, a replacement worker had to be secured before a worker could leave their employer and take up a new job.[14] In view of Germany's labour shortage, this was difficult to arrange. Most employers were unlikely to release an employee unless their work was unsatisfactory or they were troublesome – not least because releasing an employee would necessitate securing and training a replacement. In some cases husbands and wives were assigned jobs in different parts of Germany and remained separated because

[11] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 315.
[12] Quoted in Jacquemyns, *Les travailleurs déportés*, 20.
[13] CEGES/SOMA, AB2179, Alfons L, "Bommen op Berlijn". [Account written in 1994.]
[14] Ibid., BCR335 GR, *De Vlaamsche Post. Weekblad voor de Vlaamsche Arbeiders in Duitschland*, (Jahrgang 2, Nr.32, 09.08.1942, 7).

neither could obtain a release from their employers. The best approach for husbands and wives or other relatives who wished to join family members working in Germany was for those already working in Germany to line up a job with their employer and then approach the recruitment office in Belgium to arrange the necessary paperwork.

3. Young workers

Under Belgian law, teenagers could commence paid employment at the age of fourteen and were recruited for work in Germany once they attained that age.[15] Transport and residence lists and personnel records from German companies shows that a number of young Belgian workers – both male and female – were deployed in Germany during the war.[16] The parents or legal guardians of young workers were required to sign a form giving their permission for their children to work in Germany. On 23 July 1942 Military Administration official Haftmann wrote to recruitment offices advising that staff should avoid recruiting female workers below the age of eighteen and that female workers between the ages of sixteen and eighteen should only be recruited for work in industry in isolated cases with good justification.[17] Nevertheless, young Belgian women continued to work in German industry and were also deployed in domestic service or agriculture. While officials showed reluctance to allow females below the age of eighteen to be deployed in industry, they had few such reservations when it came to male teenagers. Records from December 1942 show that officials from Group VII and the Junkers plant in Dessau planned the recruitment of 1,000 male workers between the ages of fifteen and seventeen and 200 workers per month thereafter for two-year apprenticeships in skilled trades.[18] Young Belgians who worked in Germany generally fell into two categories: teenage workers who accompanied family members who were also working in Germany; and teenage workers who went unaccompanied. Young workers who fall into the second category most often came from precarious

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[15] By contrast, officially *Ostarbeiter* children could work in Germany from the age of twelve and the strict protection and safety measures for German children and young people were not applicable to *Ostarbeiter*. Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 308.

[16] SVG/DO, R.696/Tr.238190, Lists of the worker transports to Germany from Kortrijk for the period 1940-44 from Public Assistance Commission (Commission d'Assistance Publique).

[17] Ibid., *Werbestelle* Records, Az 5000 – Az 5552. Letter from Haftmann, Group VII, to all recruitment offices (dated 23.07.1942).

[18] Ibid. Letter from Haftmann, Group VII, to all recruitment offices. Filenote made by a Group VII official (dated 15.12.1942).

economic backgrounds: some were orphaned after the death of both parents and were under the guardianship of relatives; others came from large or single-parent families. In some instances Belgian teenagers used the opportunity provided by work in Germany to escape parental control.

Teenagers who went to Germany unaccompanied were treated in the same manner as adult workers by the German authorities. No specific provisions were made for their care and most were housed in camps like adult workers. It is likely that in some cases older workers took unaccompanied younger workers under their wing. However, ultimately teenage workers were left to their own devices outside work hours. The case of Jan H and Robert W illustrates the trouble teenage workers could encounter. Jan H was recruited for work in Hamburg-Altona as a trainee turner at the age of sixteen in April 1942 and was assigned accommodation at the Lager Palmaille 17. At the camp Jan H met fellow Belgian teenager Robert W who was also working as a trainee. Together Jan H and Robert W committed several thefts in the camp. The two also found their way to Hamburg's famous Reeperbahn – the centre of the city's nightlife and the red-light district – where they met a German homosexual man called Lindner who made sexual advances on the teenagers. Robert W rejected these advances and warned his young friend about his meetings with Lindner. Jan H, who was uncertain about his sexuality, and began to meet the older man regularly and performed sexual acts in exchange for money and other gifts. Jan H was arrested just eleven weeks after his arrival in Hamburg for the thefts he committed in the camp and naively confessed to police officers about his relations with Lindner. During his interrogation Jan H told police officials that he had been unaware that it was a criminal offence to commit homosexual acts. Paragraph 175 of the Criminal Code criminalised homosexual acts. The police investigators handling the case viewed Lindner as a sexual predator, concluding that his conduct was indicative of an offender who routinely seduced impressionable young males. Officials came to the conclusion that "[Lindner] was able to turn the young man into a tool without his own will because Jan H is a case of a so-called weak character". Nevertheless, despite this acknowledgement of his youth and vulnerability, the judicial authorities showed Jan H little mercy, convicting him of theft and prostitution (under Paragraphs 242, 257, 175a and 77 of the German Criminal Code and 1, 3, 9 of the Juvenile Justice Act) and sentencing him to four months imprisonment. Robert W was also convicted of theft and received the lesser sentence

of two weeks youth detention.[19] Police investigators recommended that Jan H be sent back to Belgium after serving his sentence due to his obvious criminal tendencies; however, he was subsequently despatched to the Dachau Concentration Camp where he was eventually released at the end of the war.

4. Wages

Foreign workers employed in Germany were paid according to wage groups set out in the labour accords. The tariff was established on the basis of the labour accords and workers also received any relevant bonuses for overtime, Sunday work or heavy manual labour, as well as any social welfare payments to which they were entitled.[20] The DAF bulletin "*Die Arbeitsaufnahme in Deutschland*" (Taking up employment in Germany) outlined the terms and conditions under which foreign workers would be employed in Germany, emphasising that workers from Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and France would enjoy equality with German workers:

> With the same rights and responsibilities [the foreign worker] should work shoulder by shoulder with his German work colleagues. He will always be treated with the same esteem and respect that National Socialist Germany – the Germany of working people – shows every German worker.[21]

The bulletin emphasised that the Nazi state held workers in high esteem – irrespective of their nationality. The bulletin also specifically emphasised that the principle of "equal pay for equal work" applied to these workers: "The [foreign] worker with the same level of performance should not be worse placed in terms of wages than the German worker who performs the same work".[22] However, Poles and *Ostarbeiter* were denied the equality western Europeans enjoyed.

While workers from countries allied to Germany, as well as workers from northern, western, southern and south-eastern Europe were, in principle, entitled to wage equality, these foreign workers were nevertheless at a material disadvantage for a number of reasons. Firstly, employers could exercise discretion with respect to tariff classifications and the allocation of special bonuses, and employers certainly often exploited foreign workers' lesser capacity to raise objections.[23] Secondly, workers with families carried the double burden of financially supporting two

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[19] SVG/DO, R.219/Tr.27.678, Transcript of the proceedings of the Hamburg District Court, case ref 120 DLs 134/42 jug.
[20] Poles and *Ostarbeiter* were excluded from receiving most additional payments.
[21] Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde, NS/5/I/ vorl.262 fol.1.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 162.

households. Married workers from Belgium received a per diem separation payment of 1.50RM; however, this payment did not compensate them for the cost of maintaining two households. Thirdly, the social security and taxes levied on foreign workers were also comparatively high.[24] By contrast, the Belgian state did not introduce compulsory membership of a social insurance fund for those in paid employment until after World War Two. Finally, as we have seen in chapter one, foreign workers were treated as lower-class patients by the German health insurance funds and were sent home in cases of serious illness. Thus foreign workers were required to pay for health insurance, but were not necessarily guaranteed the same level of care afforded to German patients. The Central German Health Insurance Fund for Belgium and Northern France was responsible for the reimbursement of medical expenses and incapacity benefits to Belgians who were sent home due to illness. Belgians were also required to make unemployment insurance foreign contributions of 6.5 percent of their earnings.[25] Wartime shortages and rationing also meant workers could buy few consumer goods in Germany. While Dutch workers were permitted to transfer their entire earnings to their families at home, Belgians could transfer a maximum of 125RM home each month. Additionally, foreigners were not permitted to take German currency outside the Reich and were therefore forced to exchange their earnings into Belgian francs if they returned home. Reeder reported in his Activity Report for September 1940 that "as a result [of the limits on wage transfers] Belgian workers returning on leave have sought to take their saved earnings across the border in German currency".[26] However, a closer examination of the earnings of Belgian workers in Germany shows that few Belgian workers earned sufficient wages to be able to transfer more than 125RM per month to their families at home. A more likely explanation as to why Belgian workers preferred to take their earnings back to Belgium with them was that they distrusted the transfers, which were often delayed.[27] Moreover, foreign workers lost a significant proportion of their wages when they transferred their earnings home. This was due to German policies that encouraged higher inflation in the occupied territories. The rate of exchange for

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[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 162-3.
[26] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.10, 105-6.
[27] Reeder also suggested in his Activity Report for November 1940 that some workers were avoiding wage transfers, as they would then be required to repay any interim payments their families had received from the Belgian municipal authorities while waiting for their first wage transfer from Germany. Ibid., *Tätigkeitsbericht*, Nr.11.

Reichsmark was kept artificially low to the detriment of workers transferring wages to their families. The purchasing power of wages transferred to workers' families in Belgium was therefore reduced significantly.

The information available regarding the wages paid to Belgian workers is generally limited because records such as employment contracts, wage records and personnel records are often absent from personal files held at the SVG/DO.[28] In some cases, the official record of annual earnings is available. However, the best indication of a worker's earnings is provided by payslips retained from their time in Germany, as these records also detail the overtime worked, as well as deductions. During the initial training period, which normally lasted for a period of six weeks, workers were generally paid a lower training wage.[29] The first weeks of their deployment in Germany were often particularly difficult for many workers because training wages limited their earnings. This problem was exacerbated by the fact workers who had been issued a pair of work shoes by the recruitment office in Belgium had to repay the cost of their work shoes in the form of wage deductions. Some workers found that after deductions for accommodation, food, work shoes, tax, social insurance, as well as DAF and Winter Relief Aid contributions, were taken from their wages they were paid very little. Additionally, there were often delays before workers received their first packages from home, which often made their first weeks in Germany particularly hard. It is difficult to assess to what extent Belgian workers received wage increases after completing initial training or after gaining new skills and experience, as employment contracts, where available, set out the wage paid upon commencement. The wages of some workers increased after they had completed training. In a small number of cases this wage increase was stipulated in their initial employment contract; however, most often this was not the case.

The wages earned by Belgian men in Germany point to a significant degree of variation depending on their skills and the industry in which they were deployed (see Appendix 8 on page 324 and Appendix 9 on page 327). This sample is based on one hundred wage records. The majority of those recorded in the sample worked in Berlin and Düsseldorf.[30] The hourly wage for male workers ranged from 0.56RM per hour for unskilled workers to 1.50RM per hour for skilled workers. Workers

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[28] Recruitment officials stopped producing employment contracts in March 1943.
[29] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 162.
[30] Germany was divided up into separate wage areas, with the highest wages being paid in *Gau* Berlin.

employed in the metals industry, carpentry, and printing and book binding commanded some of the highest wages. Belgian men earned 0.87RM per hour on average.

Belgian women, who had often undertaken unskilled jobs or lower-paid jobs in the textile or service industries, were usually employed in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs in German factories. Many women were also employed as kitchen-hands in canteens in workplaces or camps, in hospitality or domestic service and the textile industry. Women invariably earned substantially lower wages than their male counterparts because they tended to be employed in lower-paid jobs and discriminatory pay scales also meant that female workers were paid lower wages than men working in comparable positions. Appendix 10 on page 330 shows the earnings of a sample of twenty-one women for whom wage information is available. Although small, the sample nevertheless provides a good indication of the earnings of Belgian women in Germany. The average hourly wage earned by the women included in the sample is 0.49RM and their hourly earnings cluster around 0.50RM. At the same time, wage deductions for board and lodgings in camps were set at the same rate for women as their male colleagues. The material position of female workers was therefore significantly worse than their male counterparts. The average wage for a German woman was 23RM per week. However, it is difficult to assess to what extent Belgian women earned higher or lower wages than German women, as there was an increasing tendency for employers to employ German women for half-day work in order to encourage more women to take up paid employment. Belgian women did not, however, have the option of working on a part-time basis. While the DAF Leaflet "Accepting Work in Germany" indicates that special protections applied to women regarding work hours, an examination of the contracted work hours of Belgian women indicates that the women's work hours were similar to those of their male counterparts.

Belgian workers frequently used black market trading and bartering to supplement their wages and provide greater financial support to their families at home. Many Belgians found that the best way to improve their material position was to sell tobacco, which was much more readily available in Belgium. One worker recalled that he sold one kilogram of tobacco each month, which was sent to him by his wife. The worker then transferred the proceeds of his tobacco sales – circa 1,300–1,400bfrs – to his wife. This enabled him to retain his own wages in order to

supplement his food rations. Another worker who had a wife and three children to support told his wife to send him packages of tobacco rather than other goods. His wife purchased the tobacco for 750bfrs per kilogram and he sold it in Germany for 3,000–4,000bfrs.[31] The profits that could be made by black marketeers did not, however, come without risk. Belgian Josef J was arrested by the police in Hamburg in April 1943. He had 100g of tobacco in his possession and was accused of trading tobacco on the black market. During police questioning Josef J admitted that he had purchased three 100g packets of tobacco for 14RM each from an unidentified Dutchman at the Gross Neumarkt in Hamburg and had in turn sold the tobacco for 16RM per packet. He also admitted that he had traded cigarettes. Josef J had 525RM in his possession when he was arrested – a considerable sum that would have represented a significant portion of a worker's annual earnings. On 9 April 1943 the Hamburg District Court convicted him of trading tobacco at exorbitant prices and without ration cards (under Paragraph 1, 5 of the Ordinance on Price Regulation of 18 August 1941, Paragraph 22 of the Ordinance on the War Economy of 4 September 1939, Paragraph 1 Section 1 of the Ordinance on Rationing of 26 November 1941 and Paragraph 73 of the German Criminal Code) and sentenced him to two months imprisonment.[32]

Tobacco was also used to barter with other workers. Non-smoker Roger B regularly received packages of tobacco from his family in Ghent, which he exchanged for food with fellow workers in Halberstadt. While some workers reported that they lost weight after their arrival in Germany, Roger B told his family that he had gained weight following his arrival.[33] Some workers used tobacco as a bargaining tool. Jean L recalled that he obtained leave to return home on leave by bribing his boss at the Mannesmann Röhrenwerke AG in Düsseldorf-Rath with the promise of bringing a box of cigars upon his return.[34] Access to tobacco – a scarce commodity during the war – gave Belgian workers an enormous advantage over workers from Poland and eastern Europe and allowed some workers to make substantial profits and improve their material position immeasurably. Herbert observes that "the social hierarchy among the various groups of foreigners was

[31] Jacquemyns, *Les travailleurs déportés*, 31.
[32] SVG/DO, R.219/Tr.27.678, Flemish translation of the records of the Hamburg District Court, Department 132, case ref. 132 Cs 187/43.
[33] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/36, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Roger B. Letter sent by Roger B's mother discussing contents of her son's previous letter (dated 15.01.1944).
[34] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jean L.

extended even to the substructures via which food was obtained; the gradations became even more rigorous".[35] Thierry Bonzen and Belinda Davis emphasise in their study of food and consumption during the First World War that the black market redistributes resources to those who have the ease and influence to use it.[36] Western Europeans also earned higher wages and were not subject to the wage restrictions that had such a deleterious effect on the earnings of Poles and *Ostarbeiter*.[37] Western Europeans' higher earnings ensured that they had a greater capacity to access goods on the black market. As privileged western Europeans, Belgians were also exempted from wearing a badge that identified them as foreigners, as was required of *Ostarbeiter* and Poles. This enabled them to blend into the German civilian population more readily and therefore gave them greater access to the black market that operated beyond the camps. Their privileged status also gave western European workers greater confidence in their day-to-day dealings with the German public. Many Flemings were also able to take greater advantage of the black market because the linguistic similarities between Flemish and German enabled them to learn the German language more quickly.

Some women used prostitution to supplement their income, while others gave up other employment and relied solely on prostitution to earn a living. Belgian women working as prostitutes were recruited to work for German employers and turned to prostitution as a way of making ends meet after their arrival in Germany. The earnings that could be made through prostitution were much higher than the wages paid by German employers. Some women working as prostitutes reported that they saw up to fifty clients per day.[38] Belgian Andrée B told police officers that she worked as a prostitute on weekends alongside her usual factory job, earning 100–200RM per day. Andrée B explained that she had a six-month-old child to support

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[35] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 328.
[36] Thierry Bonzon and Belinda Davis, "Food and Consumption," in *Paris, London, Berlin. Capital Cities at War, 1914-1919*, ed. Johannes Winter and JL Robert (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994).
[37] According to the rates set in July 1944 in the *Gau* labour office in Berlin, where the highest wages were paid, Poles could earn a maximum of 7RM per week for men and 5.55RM per week for women. Poles were also excluded from most bonuses and additional payments. Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 154.
[38] Boberach, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich,* vol. 15, 6069. (Inlandsfragen: 29.11.1943)

who was being cared for in France.[39] Single mother Andrée B found that prostitution provided much needed additional income to support her child.

Wages were a common cause for complaint amongst western Europeans. Frans G and Pieter D were recruited to work as trainees for the aviation manufacturer Junkers in Dessau on 24 March 1941. After their arrival they were transferred to Süddeutsche Maschinen- und Gerätebau GmbH in Meretitz-Eggertal in the southern Germany. The two workers were content with the work, accommodation and food provisions in Meretitz-Eggertal, but had cause for complaint because they only received an hourly wage of 0.57RM, even though their employment contracts stipulated that they would be paid 0.70RM per hour. Upon their return to Belgium in July 1941 the men visited the recruitment office in Mechelen, where they had been recruited, to complain about their employer's failure to pay them the wage agreed in their employment contracts. Recruitment officials from Antwerp and Mechelen subsequently intervened in the case, writing to the Junkers management: "It seems advisable that the workers recruited in Belgium should be guaranteed the wage set out in their employment contract, and the difference [between the wage paid and the wage stipulated in the contract] should be repaid".[40] But despite the strongly-worded objections of officials in Belgium, the Junkers management would not waver. On 23 July 1941 a company representative wrote to the recruitment office justifying the payment of lower wages on the basis that the men's wages reflected the pay-scales in southern Germany, and argued that in fairness to all workers employed at the company's factory in Meretitz-Eggertal the men could not be paid at the rate set out in their contracts. Company officials were clearly conscious that disagreements would inevitably arise if workers found that certain colleagues were receiving higher wages. The company official argued that the men were not worse off financially, in any case, as living expenses such as accommodation and food were significantly lower in Meretitz-Eggertal.[41] It is unclear whether these two workers initially raised their objections directly with workplace representatives or their employer without success; however, this case illustrates that Belgians used all means available to ensure their rights were upheld. Additionally, the case is interesting as it shows that

[39] LAB, A Rep. 358-02: Nr.111910, sworn statement dated 22.10.1943 [files of the Berlin State Court in relation to the prosecution of a French national accused of the living off the earnings of prostitution, case reference (512) KLs 46/43 (70/44)].
[40] SVG/DO, D67264/378.955 and SDR 158695. Letter to Junkers Flugzeug- und Motorenwerke AG from the Antwerp recruitment office (dated 07.07.1941)
[41] Ibid.

some recruitment officials acted in good faith and sought to ensure that recruits were treated properly and that the terms of their employment contracts were upheld. Officials took this matter personally – not least because they were well aware that negative reports from workers in Germany filtered back to Belgium and hampered recruitment.

5. Work hours

Spoerer emphasises that, although employers generally had a free hand in the workplace and could use their own discretion in determining industrial matters, this did not lead to the greater exploitation of foreign workers in terms of the hours they were required to work. As a general rule, Germans and foreigners worked the same number of hours, as the task of overseeing the work of foreigners was undertaken by German employees who worked the same shifts.[42] Foreign workers worked fifty-six hours a week nominally, although this was later often raised to sixty hours a week.[43] Appendix 8 on page 324 and Appendix 10 on page 330 provide an indication of the hours Belgians were contracted to work. Herbert emphasises that normal work rhythms were disrupted from 1943 onwards and nominal working hours became illusory, since actual hours worked declined due to air-raid warnings, lost time because of repairs, breakdowns in public transportation and increased numbers of workers reporting sick, leading to an increase of overtime and Sunday work.[44] Belgians employed in industry commonly worked ten, eleven or twelve-hour shifts five days a week, with a break of half an hour or an hour for lunch, and generally worked a half day on Saturdays. Additionally, workers employed in industry were also often required to work one Sunday in three or one Sunday in two, or perhaps even more. Workers employed in smaller businesses or who had been assigned white-collar jobs recalled that they worked from 8.00am–5.00pm Monday to Friday and a half day on Saturdays. Louis B recalled: "It was said work above all else, virtually no leisure time, our little [spare] time was used for doing our washing, mending our socks, preparing our meals etc... I worked twelve hours per day and three Sundays in four".[45] Workers whose accommodation was not located close to their place of work might also face a journey of up to an hour at the start and end of

[42] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 148.
[43] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 307.
[44] Ibid., 226.
[45] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Louis B.

their shift. Workers therefore had very little leisure time, especially during weeks when they were required to work on Sunday. While German women were protected by the prohibition of night work, there were no such restrictions on working hours for foreign women. Belgian women could in principle be allocated night work, although it is unclear whether many Belgian women were required to undertake night work.[46] Factories in the war industries often operated around the clock and employers usually ran two twelve-hour shifts or three eight-hour shifts. Belgians employed in factories where multiple shifts were in operation generally report that their shifts rotated on a weekly basis, although occasionally workers were assigned to work the day shift or night shift on a permanent basis.

6. Modern work environment

Western workers were often very positive in their assessment of the German work environment. Many Belgians reported that the facilities in German factories were excellent: factories were modern and many had been improved through the DAF's "Beauty of Labour" project; workplaces were well equipped and work tools were in good condition; and work was well organised.[47] One French worker wrote:

> As far as the plant is concerned, or to put it more correctly, the way things are organised, well it's just perfect. I wish they could see the facilities here, all the machines we have, the wash-stands, showers and lockers for clothing. Imagine the lessons French employers could learn from this.[48]

One Belgian similarly recalled that "the working conditions were more agreeable there than here [in Belgium]".[49] Even workers who came from industrialised countries in western Europe were impressed with the modern work environment in Germany and the enlightened approach of some companies. From a professional standpoint many Belgians also reported that they felt that their time in Germany was profitable.[50] Belgians who were assigned different jobs in Germany had the opportunity to gain new skills and experience. The opportunity to expand their skills enabled some Belgians to improve their future employment prospects and was therefore a welcome opportunity that many workers grasped.

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[46] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 307.
[47] Jacquemyns, *Les travailleurs déportés*, 31-2.
[48] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 314.
[49] Quoted in Jacquemyns, *Les travailleurs déportés*, 31.
[50] Ibid., 32.

7. Sickness and absenteeism

Absenteeism became a major problem for employers from 1943. As the statistics on worker health at Deutsche Werft have shown, the number of workers suffering from illness steadily increased over the war and invariably affected production. Workplace accidents, as well as factors such as long work hours and air-raid alarms at night that led to general exhaustion, resulted in higher absenteeism. Many workers also used reporting sick as a means of avoiding work, and in some cases this was a veiled strike. However, Herbert emphasises that the rates of absenteeism amongst western European workers were not higher than those of German workers.[51] In response to the problem of absenteeism many companies introduced a system whereby a company representative attended the workers' camps every morning to register sick employees. Those who reported sick were sent to the company doctor. Another worker recalled that the factory police came to his camp each morning to register sick workers. Sick workers were sent to the company doctor and "those who were not very sick were given two aspirin tablets and were sent to work, while those who had a fever were given two aspirin tablets and were sent to bed for a day's rest".[52] In other factories the factory nurse came to the camp to examine workers who reported sick and if their illness was considered serious enough the nurse sent the worker to see the doctor outside the camp, accompanied by another worker.[53] In this manner company managers limited access to doctors and reduced the number of work hours lost due to workers seeking medical attention. Company doctors therefore played a key role in reducing absenteeism and lost hours. Such a system was, however, only possible at camps that were run by companies for employees. Foreign workers recognised that in most cases company doctors acted as an arm of the company management. Addressing Central Planning in October 1944 Speer reported:

> Ley has determined that where plant doctors are present and people are examined by them, the number of workers on the sick-list immediately drops by a fourth or fifth. The SS and police could go right ahead, and put those persons known to be idlers and malingerers in concentration camp factories. There's no other solution.[54]

The Nazi authorities and company officials regarded absenteeism and work avoidance as a major threat to industrial production. Frustrated by widespread

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[51] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 226.
[52] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Victor B.
[53] Ibid., AA1216/15, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Marcel A.
[54] Quoted in Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 331.

absenteeism, the German authorities advocated a harsh approach to those considered to be idlers and malingerers. Herbert observes, "Speer had fired the starting pistol for a tightening of the penal system against 'loafing' which would then boost performance by repression".[55] Regulations issued by the Reich Main Security Office and Sauckel at the end of 1943 provided for a graduated system of internal and external penalties. Company managers were given more punitive authority and the *Gestapo* was given sole responsibility for penalties external to the factory; through the use of the *Gestapo* to handle the serious cases, the German authorities sought to avoid clogging up the courts with industrial matters.

Employers became increasingly reluctant to allow sick workers to return home, even if a medical doctor recommended that the worker return home to convalesce:

> The doctor who cared for me told me that I could go home on leave, but the boss of the factory did not want to allow me to leave because I would not return. I had a lot of difficulties obtaining leave, I stayed at the barracks without working to convalesce.[56]

Unless a worker was gravely ill, many employers probably adopted a wait-and-see approach, hoping that their employee's health would improve. As the labour shortage became more acute, and it became increasingly difficult to obtain replacement workers, employers tried to prevent foreign employees returning home, especially as a considerable number did not return to their jobs in Germany. In February 1943 Belgian Samuel G fell ill and, despite receiving intensive medical treatment, his condition showed little prospect of improving in the short-term. The physician treating Samuel G recommended that he be released from service:

> As it will take more time for [the illness to heal], we order that patient return to his home in Belgium. The patient requires lengthy and attentive nursing. We therefore recommend the return of [the patient's] wife, who is also working in Berlin.[57]

This case illustrates that Belgians received often good medical care and that Belgian workers were sent home when they were suffering from a serious or life-threatening illness. The release of the worker's wife from service so that she could return to Belgium and nurse her husband back to good health also demonstrates that Belgian workers often received privileged treatment.

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[55] Ibid.
[56] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jacques C.
[57] SVG/DO, SDR 381127.

8. Leave provisions

The leave entitlements of foreign civilians employed in Germany were set out in a decree published in August 1941. In accordance with this decree, married workers were entitled to leave after six months of continuous service, while unmarried workers were entitled to leave after completing twelve months of continuous service. However, many Belgian women, including unmarried women, obtained leave after just six months of service, and in some instances even less. By contrast with western Europeans, Poles faced a virtual ban on leave until the end of the war with leave only granted in exceptional cases on the grounds of the death or serious illness of a close family member or marriage, while workers from the USSR were even worse placed having no entitlement to leave.[58] The length of leave granted to foreign workers was determined by the distance of their home from their place of work in Germany:

Table 4: Leave provisions[59]

Distance (km)	*Number of days*
up to 500	7
500–700	8
750–1,000	9
over 1,000	10

The timing of a worker's leave was determined by their employer taking into account the needs of the company and the availability of worker transport trains.[60] German employers met the travel costs for home leave, although the employer could deduct the travel costs from the worker's wages or veto their next scheduled leave period if they returned to Germany after the end of their leave period.[61]

Leave provisions were an important consideration for prospective recruits and hampered the recruitment of female workers during the first months of the occupation. The importance of leave provisions is illustrated by the difficulties

[58] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 167. Sauckel relaxed the restrictions on leave for eastern workers in July 1943 granting them the entitlement to one week of paid leave in Germany in the second year of their service, but did grant eastern workers leave to return home.

[59] Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde, NS/5/I/vorl.262 fol.1., DAF *Merkblatt "Die Arbeitsaufnahme in Deutschland"*.

[60] On 6 October 1941 the Reich Labour Minister advised the Reich Transport Minister that it was necessary to institute measures to ensure that foreigners employed in Germany only travel on special trains scheduled for workers going on leave when returning home. Ibid., letter dated 06.10.1941.

[61] Ibid., "*Tarifordnung zur Regelung von Familienheimfahrten während der Kriegszeit für ausländischer Arbeitskräfte im Deutschen Reich*", issued by the Reich Labour Trustee for the Brandenburg economic area as Special Trustee, Tarifregister Nr.3301/2 (dated 27.08.1941).

encountered by the Military Administration in recruiting women for domestic service. In November 1940 Reeder noted in his Activity Report that there were 2,200 available vacancies for women in domestic service jobs in Germany and just 700 Belgian women had been recruited, even though there were an estimated 20,000 unemployed domestic servants in Belgium. Reeder suggested that the reason behind the unwillingness of Belgian domestics to accept work in Germany was that there were no provisions for the reimbursement of their travel costs for leave in Belgium. To solve this problem, Reeder proposed that the Belgian Labour Ministry should be required to cover the travel costs of domestic servants returning to Belgium on leave because German housewives could not be expected to pay for the travel costs of their domestic servants and these costs would, in any case, be less than the cost of paying unemployment benefits.[62] The persistence of unemployment amongst female domestic servants, in spite of many unfilled vacancies in Germany, illustrates that Belgian workers were not prepared to accept work in Germany on any terms. Leave provisions were a deal breaker and many Belgians would not consider working in Germany if there were not adequate leave provisions.

The labour authorities sought to limit the granting of leave to foreign workers during the Christmas and New Year period. In late 1941 the Reich Labour Minister issued an appeal for the restriction of travel over the Christmas period, emphasising that the German railways had to prioritise the supply of goods to the front, as well as the travel of serving soldiers who had been granted leave to visit their families after brave military service. However, the denial of leave angered western European volunteers who had been assured that they would be granted leave. Frustrated with the refusal to grant leave over the festive season some workers breached their employment contract and returned home illegally, while others elected to return to Belgium when their contract ended.

Initially the number of foreign workers who absconded remained relatively low. However, absconding workers became a major problem for German employers from the summer of 1942, levelling off towards the end of 1943 at around 45,000 per month. At IG-Farben in Ludwigshafen, of 407 western Europeans granted leave in May and June 1943 only 58 returned on time, while 278 (68 percent) did not return.[63] The Drahtwerke Eidelstedt GmbH in Hamburg employed six Belgians during the

[62] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, Nr.11.
[63] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 341.

war. The company's records show that four of these workers commenced employment with the company on 13 September 1943. The four men were all granted leave on 30 June 1944 and failed to return to Germany after the end of their leave. Another joined the company on 20 January 1943 and returned to Belgium on leave a few weeks later on 23 February 1943 and failed to return. The last Belgian to work for the company was dismissed on 6 December 1944 less than a month after he commenced employment with the company.[64] Employers in other parts of Germany also had similar experiences with western European employees. German employers were understandably frustrated, and demanded the right to block contractually stipulated leave if they suspected a worker would not return. Sauckel faced the problem of balancing the demands of employers with the expectations of western Europeans who had been assured that they would receive regular leave. Sauckel was reluctant to issue a blanket ban on leave for western Europeans due to concerns that an outright ban would provoke widespread unrest. In August 1943 Sauckel did, however, authorise employers to ban leave if the needs of their business necessitated such a step – giving employers a significant degree of discretion to block leave.[65] On 1 September 1943 Sauckel suspended the granting of home leave to foreign workers until 15 October 1943 and from mid October 1943 more wide-ranging restrictions were implemented, due to large numbers of workers who failed to return. After the introduction of greater restrictions in October 1943 few Belgians were granted leave. Many unmarried men who were conscripted after the introduction of the compulsory labour draft spent up to thirty months in Germany without returning to Belgium. Emile S recalled that single men knew they had no chance of obtaining leave.[66] In some cases workers were permitted to return on compassionate grounds because a family member was suffering from a serious illness or due to family bereavement. However, all leave was left to the discretion of employers and, as Frans S bitterly recalled, his employer even refused to grant leave upon the death of a parent.[67] Excepting a small number of workers who were sent home due to serious illness, the more than 200,000 Belgians working in Germany at the time of Belgium's liberation

[64] SVG/DO, R.451/Tr.75.702, Letter from the Drahtwerke Eidelstedt GmbH in Hamburg to BLO de Maen (dated 09.02.1951).
[65] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 341.
[66] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Emile S.
[67] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Frans S.

were cut off after Belgium fell to the Allies in September 1944. Sauckel finally cancelled all leave for western Europeans in January 1945.

The introduction of a guarantor system when granting leave for western Europeans further strengthened the hand of employers. In some cases workers were treated as a group and if a worker who visited home on leave failed to return to Germany their employer might refuse to grant leave to their fellow countrymen. In many companies workers acted as a personal guarantor for a work colleague who went home on leave. The guarantor system was clearly underpinned by the assumption that camaraderie amongst foreign workers would engender a sense of obligation towards their colleagues and workers would therefore return to Germany at the end of their leave. Conscripted worker Jeanne C, who was granted leave in December 1943 because her father was ill, later recalled:

> After my leave I returned to Germany because before my departure for Belgium another girl had to act as a guarantor in Germany and I did not want to cause her to have no opportunity to return [home]. That's why I did not want to go into hiding in order to escape returning to Germany.[68]

Conscripted worker Jean B similarly recalled: "A young deportee turner who arrived after me whom I had helped a lot signed for me [to go on leave]".[69] Workers like Jeanne C and Jean B had to make a choice between their own freedom and denying their colleagues the chance to visit home. The guarantor system was probably more effective when workers were required to have a colleague agree to act as a guarantor for their return because the failure to return from leave was in effect a personal betrayal of a colleague or perhaps even a close friend.

The introduction of a guarantor system still failed to deter many workers from breaching their labour contracts when they returned home on leave. Those amongst the latter groups scheduled to return home were inevitably consigned to spending the remainder of the war in Germany with no opportunity to visit their families. Workers who were denied the opportunity to return home after a fellow worker failed to return from leave did not generally express animosity towards colleagues who did not return. Robert Q recalled:

> I never returned on leave. This is why: the French and Belgians were considered as one group. Two Frenchmen were able to go on leave (three weeks, if I recall correctly). Upon their return two Belgians were to have their

[68] SVG/DO, D39757/333361, sworn statement made by Jeanne C (dated 15.07.1952).
[69] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jean B.

> turn and so on. Only, we knew in advance that the Frenchmen would not return. Due to this fact no further leave was authorised.[70]

After the failure of workers to return from leave employers often took advantage of the powers given to them by Sauckel, blocking all leave. Workers who were denied leave to return home naturally felt great disappointment, but they did not generally resent colleagues who were fortunate enough to be amongst the first who were granted leave, especially as employers often gave priority to married workers with wives and children at home. Workers themselves were often honest with each other regarding their intentions. The knowledge that the Frenchmen were not planning to return did not prompt the Belgians to report this information to their employer. Some even left parting gifts such as money or other goods as a consolation gesture to those they left behind.[71] The anger felt by workers who could not obtain leave was usually directed at those they felt were responsible – the employers and labour authorities who held them hostage in Germany.

The records of leave granted to Belgians show that they were required to place the sum of 300RM on deposit with the Deutsche Bank before they returned to Belgium on leave from 1943. In most cases this figure represented a significant proportion of a worker's earnings – perhaps as much as a quarter of their annual earnings – and it is evident that workers forfeited the deposit if they failed to return. This deposit clearly intended to be an incentive for them to return to Germany. However, many workers probably felt that the loss of the deposit was a small price to pay for the opportunity to escape Germany – especially as bombing raids became more frequent.

Some workers were granted leave to return home after their barracks had been destroyed by bombing. These workers were sent home to obtain new clothes after all their belongings were destroyed. Sending workers home on leave also temporarily solved the problem of where to house them until new accommodation could be arranged. In cases where a worker's accommodation and place of work were located together their employer may have been forced to suspend work in any case. Moreover, employers probably chose to send workers home temporarily rather than release them to the Labour Office.

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[70] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Robert Q.
[71] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 167.

9. Marriage and morality

A number of Belgian women used marriage as grounds to seek leave and return home. Some women were engaged to be married at the time of their conscription, while in other cases weddings were arranged by relatives who were eager to secure their return to Belgium. It is likely that some women found themselves entering into marriage prematurely under pressure from their family. In view of the lurid claims of those campaigning against the conscription of Belgian workers, it is not surprising that Belgian families held grave fears for the fate of young women who went to Germany and endeavoured to secure their return through all available means. Married women were not liable for compulsory labour service in Germany and some of those who returned to get married probably hoped that they would be permitted to remain in Belgium.

The conscription of Belgian workers prompted a public outcry in Belgium. Church leaders and the Young Christian Workers (KAJ/JOC) led a campaign against conscription, decrying the living and working conditions of Belgian conscripts in Germany.[72] A central element of the campaign against conscription was the claim that the morality of workers, in particular young women, was compromised in Germany. Belgian Christian organisations took up the task of shielding Belgian workers from moral temptation and spiritual degradation. Letters expressing moral outrage sent home by conscripted workers, many of whom were female, were read publicly by representatives of the KAJ/JOC and parish priests in Belgium. The representative of the head of the Security Police and Security Service in Belgium and Northern France reported in March 1943 that opponents of the conscription of Belgian workers were making the claim that "young girls who went to Germany pure and chaste were ruined within days".[73] The letters of conscripted workers painted a picture of workers' camps rife with sexual immorality; describing strip-tease acts, indecent pictures on the walls, brothels, orgies and the abundance of contraceptive devices such as condoms, which could be readily purchased in public toilets in cities like Berlin.[74] Morally indignant letter writers complained that conscripts were housed

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[72] Pieter Lagrou, *The legacy of Nazi occupation*, 146. The KAJ/JOC was founded in France and Belgium in the 1920s as one of the most dynamic branches of the Catholic Action and shared its missionary spirit for the re-Christianisation of the working classes under strict clerical guidance.
[73] CEGES/SOMA, AA553, *SP/SD Meldungen aus Belgien und Nord Frankreich*, 4/43, 21.
[74] Lagrou, *The legacy of Nazi occupation*, 145. Annette F Timm emphasises that condoms – bought by men – for instance, were never banned despite their dual function as both prophylactic and birth control device Annette F Timm, "The Politics of Fertility: Population Politics and Health Care in

together with volunteers who were living freely and that all moral inhibitions were soon abandoned, even amongst the morally pure. It was also reported that free love and abortions were the order of the day in Germany.[75] Catholic priest Gaston Poppe, the leader of the social works section of the Catholic Action for the Mechelen area, agitated against the conscription of workers in his sermons and at gatherings of workers, warning that many workers had become infected with sexually transmitted infections.[76] Female volunteers were characterised as "adventurers" who went to Germany so that they would be liberated from moral and social constraints.

It is certainly true that going to Germany was a liberating experience for young Belgians, offering the opportunity to escape the control of their families and the strictures of Belgium's traditionally "pillarised" society. Belgian workers enjoyed greater freedoms in Germany – including sexual freedom. And certainly there is no smoke without fire. Occasionally there are references to sexual impropriety in workers' quarters in the records. Albert S recorded in his diary: "'Uncle said women had run across our beds without any trousers on".[77] References to sexual impropriety are often described in the third person, describing another person's exploits. Members of the German population complained about the alleged sexual promiscuity of foreign women. In Tübingen, for example, the Security Service reported in July 1941 that seven members of the Hitler Youth were in the habit of "going for walks with Belgian women at night and having sexual intercourse with them".[78] The moral panic discourse that was a core element of the Christian organisations' campaign against the conscription of Belgian workers stigmatised female workers, in particular female volunteers, many of whom came from precarious socio-economic backgrounds and went to Germany to work in order to support themselves and their families.[79] Most Catholic Action activists came from middle-class backgrounds. Pieter Lagrou argues that Catholic Action activists "very explicitly based their moral

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Berlin, 1919-1972" (The University of Chicago, 1999), 59. Timm's thesis has since been published Annette F Timm, *The Politics of Fertility in Twentieth-Century Berlin* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[75] CEGES/SOMA, AA553, *SP/SD Meldungen aus Belgien und Nord Frankreich*, 4/43, 21. Clearly, some of these claims were exaggerated. Abortion was a crime for "racially valuable" women and the German Criminal Code provided for severe prison sentences.

[76] Ibid., *SP/SD Meldungen aus Belgien und Nord Frankreich,* 5/43, 17.

[77] Ibid., AA1216/38, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Albert S (diary entry 01.01.1944).

[78] Quoted in Stephenson, "Triangle: Foreign Workers, German Civilians, and the Nazi Regime," 349.

[79] Lagrou, *The legacy of Nazi occupation*, 145.

contempt for their compatriots on social prejudice".[80] Margaret R Higgonet and Patrice LR Higgonet have observed that the "social and economic roles of many women undergo rapid and radical transformation at the onset of war and, in a symmetrically opposed direction, at its conclusion".[81] This double helix analogy is particularly true of Belgian women who went to Germany during the Second World War. For many Belgian women the time spent in Germany during the war was a hiatus when they enjoyed new autonomy and employment opportunities; however, women faced social stigma upon their return as the Belgium's pre-war moral and social order was restored. The discourse of moral panic tarnished the reputations of women who went to Germany and some women felt the need to keep the period they spent in Germany secret after the war. The stigma attached to the women who worked in Germany also helps to explain why proportionally few women applied for recognition as deportees after the end of the war.

Women granted leave to return to Belgium to marry were told that their impending marriage did not preclude them from returning to Germany; however, many women did not return. Textile worker Henriette D was conscripted in November 1942. After failing to depart for Germany on the appointed date Henriette D was collected by the military police and transported to Köthen, near Dessau. She was granted leave to return home for her marriage in April 1943 and used the opportunity to avoid returning to Germany. Henriette D recalled:

> Afterwards I had to depart for Germany again, but I didn't go. I went with my husband to work for farmers in France. The Germans did not anticipate that. I had no more trouble with the occupiers. I worked there until the end of January 1944.[82]

Male workers could also obtain leave to return home for marriage. While for female workers marriage represented a real possibility to escape Germany and remain in Belgium, marriage offered males the opportunity to obtain more frequent leave to return home as married men. In other cases, those who were in de-facto relationships when they departed were prompted to formalise a long-standing relationship with their partner, due to the high wage deductions for unmarried workers, and ensure

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[80] Ibid., 150.
[81] Margaret R Higgonet and Patrice LR Higgonet, "The Double Helix," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret R Higgonet, et al. (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1987), 31.
[82] SVG/DO, D17325/329795, Sworn statement made by Henriette D (dated 02.08.1951).

their partner received the daily separation payment.[83] However, the families of some women engaged to men working in Germany opposed their marriage on the grounds that the newlyweds would embark on a miserable existence living apart if their son-in-law returned to Germany. Families also worried that their prospective son-in-law might be killed during a bombardment leaving behind a pregnant widow.[84]

10. Pregnancy

Pregnancy was another avenue used by Belgian women to return home. The RAM prescribed that foreign women who were pregnant should be deported – a policy that remained in force until December 1942.[85] However, high rates of pregnancy, especially amongst Polish and *Ostarbeiter* women, led the German authorities to conclude that the practice of deporting pregnant foreigners encouraged them to deliberately fall pregnant in order to return home. The authorities therefore abandoned the practice of deporting pregnant foreigners from the end of 1942. From March 1943 pregnant Polish and *Ostarbeiter* women had the right to request an abortion, subject to the authorisation of the local abortions' evaluation section of the General Medical Council.[86] By contrast with their Polish and Soviet counterparts, Belgian women who were pregnant were given leave from their jobs in Germany for six months and were permitted to return home for childbirth. Factory worker Celestina R was conscripted in October 1942 and worked at a chemical factory in Leipzig. She was given leave to go home for her marriage in April 1943 and returned to Germany after her wedding, Celestina R was subsequently released by her employer on 31 May 1943 due to pregnancy. Many Belgian women who returned home for childbirth did not return to Germany. Conscript Germaine W commenced work at Junkers in Magdeburg in January 1943 after spending two months at the company's training centre in Ghent. In late April 1943 she returned to Belgium on leave due to pregnancy and returned to Germany at the end of October 1943.[87] Like many Belgian working mothers, it is most likely that Germaine W left her child in the care of relatives upon her return to Germany. Henriette H was conscripted in

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[83] Jacquemyns, *Les travailleurs déportés*, 72.
[84] Ibid., 73.
[85] Heusler argues that the policy of deporting pregnant foreign women was not enforced universally, but rather there were regional differences in the handling of pregnant foreigners. Heusler, *Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft*, 365.
[86] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 270.
[87] SVG/DO, D48851/359552.

November 1942. The recruitment office postponed her departure so that Henriette H could marry. However, her impending marriage did not prompt the authorities to exempt her from conscription. Henriette H was finally forced to depart for Germany in early January 1943, but returned to Belgium in July 1943 due to pregnancy. Officials granted a release from conscription after Henriette H returned to Belgium.[88] These cases illustrate that even conscripted Belgian women were permitted to return home to give birth. Belgian women who gave birth in Germany did so by choice whether due to economic circumstances, the social stigma attached to illegitimate births and the desire to conceal their pregnancy from their families in Belgium or because they did not wish to be separated from the child's father when they returned home.

As the producers of "racially valuable" offspring, Flemish expectant mothers were protected under the Law for the Protection of Mothers in Gainful Employment (*Mutterschutzgesetz*).[89] The law was passed on 17 May 1942 to safeguard the health of pregnant workers and gave expectant mothers the right to stop work in the final six weeks before the birth and forbade work during the first six weeks after the birth, while nursing mothers were entitled to leave from work for eight weeks after the birth and twelve weeks in the case of premature births. By contrast with Flemings, pregnant Walloons were not protected by the *Mutterschutzgesetz*; however, it is unclear to what extent Walloons and Flemings were treated differently in practice.

In some parts of Germany maternity homes were set up for western European women. Forty-two children were born at a maternity home for western European women in Brunswick in 1944, for example, and six of these infants died. This represented a mortality rate of 14 percent, which was comparable to a mortality rate of 15 percent amongst the German newborns up to the age of six months, and contrasted with the mortality rate of 80 percent at the maternity home for Polish and *Ostarbeiter* women.[90] Many children born to Belgian mothers in Germany did not survive beyond the first few months of their life. However, as rates of mortality rose considerably during the war, the rates of mortality amongst newborns born to Belgian mothers were not necessarily higher than amongst children born to German

[88] Ibid., D37915/366298, Statement made by the Antwerp police authorities (dated 25.11.1953).
[89] Expectant mothers from Croatia, Bulgaria, Italy, Serbia, Hungary, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland and the Flemish part of Belgium were protected under the *Mutterschutzgesetz*.
[90] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 208. The infant mortality rate was 6.1 percent in Germany in 1939 Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany* (London: Longman, 2001), 7.

mothers. A significant proportion of the Belgian women who gave birth in Germany were unmarried. Without a family support network and with limited financial means to support their children after their birth, some Belgian mothers abandoned their babies in Germany, while others left their children in the care of Germans who were prepared to care for them. The Nazi People's Welfare provided assistance to single mothers with "racially valuable" children. However, it is not clear whether Belgian women were entitled to access to the same social welfare programs that were available to German mothers, and still less the extent to which Belgian women succeeded in accessing social welfare payments and services.

11. Breach of labour contract

Breach of labour contract (*Vertragsbruch*) became a problem for labour administrators from the beginning of the *Ausländereinsatz*. As set out in the DAF guidelines, breach of labour contract referred to unauthorised absence from the workplace, but also encompassed refusal to work. Military Administration officials in Belgium used the linguistically similar designation *Kontraktbruch*, but used the term in the narrower sense applying the term to workers who had breached their labour contract by failing to return after a period of leave in Belgium or returning home illegally. Caution must therefore be exercised when discussing the issue of breach of labour contract. The term *Arbeitsflucht* (flight from work or absconding) is also problematic because it is imprecise and groups together offences that were not registered separately by the Nazi authorities.[91] The issue of workers who remained in Belgium illegally after a period of leave and flight from work will be examined separately in order to bring greater clarity to the issue.

The motivations behind breaches of contract changed over the course of the war. The Military Administration first reported that an increasing number of Belgians had broken their labour contracts and returned home in December 1940.[92] Reeder noted in March 1941 that 2,200 Belgians were reported to have breached their labour contracts in Germany, prompting the authorities to increase border security and establish a reception camp near the Belgian-German border in Aachen. During the first months of the deployment of foreigners many workers broke their contracts and returned home due to concerns for their family's welfare. These

[91] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 341.
[92] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, Nr.12, 71.

concerns often stemmed from delays in wage transfers. As winter set in many Belgians also became increasingly dissatisfied with the weather and working conditions in Germany. Poor weather conditions often halted work in the construction industry during winter. Highlighting this problem, construction worker Albert S recorded in his diary that he did not work on seven workdays during January 1944 due to the poor weather conditions in Schönebeck on the Elbe.[93] Workers employed in industries affected by cold weather often worked reduced hours and faced a resultant drop in their wages, and some therefore preferred to return home during the winter months. While work in industries such as agriculture and construction was often seasonal, and many migrant workers traditionally returned home during winter, Germany's labour administrators sought to break the pattern of seasonal work and force workers to remain in Germany – probably due to fears that workers would not return.[94] This refusal to allow workers to return home during winter was a source of great frustration for construction workers, who could not spend the festive season with their families. To add insult to injury, workers might spend days on end idle in the barracks because it was too cold outside to work.

Belgians like other residents of German cities were menaced by the spectre of bombing. Fear of bombing emerged as a major reason for the failure of workers to return from leave from 1943, coinciding with the intensification of Allied bombing. The Military Administration suggested many Belgians, and in particular women, who failed to return to Germany after going home on leave were afraid of the bombing raids that had become increasingly frequent.[95] Workers' fears were compounded due to the poor air-raid protection that was available to foreign workers. Foreign workers were exposed to the bombing raids to a greater degree than the German population. In Essen, for example, 7.7 percent of the German inhabitants were killed by bombs during the war, contrasted with 13.8 percent of the foreign workers.[96] Foreign workers' camps were frequently located at the epicentre of bombing, and they were therefore often disproportionately represented amongst the bombing victims. With most Belgians working in industrialised areas that were affected by bombing it is not surprising that an increasing number of Belgians failed

[93] Ibid., AA1216/38, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, diary kept by Albert S.
[94] Prior to WWI the "closure period" (*Karenzzeit)* regulation, which was introduced in 1891, required seasonal labourers (mainly Polish) to return home during winter.
[95] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, Nr.24, Anlage D, 16.
[96] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 317.

to return from leave, especially if their barracks or workplace had been affected by bombing.

Most Belgians who broke their labour contracts did so after a period of leave in Belgium. The Military Administration was therefore charged with responsibility for ensuring that Belgian contract-breakers were returned to Germany. Officials in Belgium relied upon two key measures to force contract-breakers to return to Germany: the denial of all financial support such as unemployment benefits; and the denial of ration cards. These measures were intended to make life financially difficult for contract-breakers and their families. In May 1941 Reeder reported that 70-80 percent of Belgian contract-breakers returned to Germany after they had visited their family and recruitment officials had dealt with the case.[97] Sisters Maria and Anna V were granted leave in 1942 and failed to return to their employer, the Firma Eiso Schrauben GmbH in Eisefeld, Thuringia. After sending repeated summonses demanding the women return to their jobs in Germany, their employer wrote to the Rationing Office in Antwerp on 20 April 1942, requesting the withdrawal of the women's ration cards in a final attempt to force the women to return to Germany.[98] But these efforts were in vain and the women failed to return. Maria V subsequently took up employment in Berlin, marrying a German in 1945 and remaining in Germany. Many Belgians broke their employment contracts only to resume employment in Germany with a new employer. Certainly some Belgians broke their contracts because they were dissatisfied with their job and had not been permitted to change jobs.

While the labour administration had a policy of returning workers who broke their contract to their existing employer, it is clear that recruitment offices often arranged new labour assignments for contract-breakers. In view of the fact that it was difficult to change jobs, breaking one's employment contract was a key means of ending a labour assignment. The increasing tendency to assign contracts to Belgian companies and the protection of factories involved in war production from August 1943 probably meant that labour officials in Belgium were less likely to return a contract-breaker to Germany if they managed to find work in the war industries. Officials in Belgium most likely adopted a pragmatic approach to this problem, and were, in some cases, sympathetic towards Belgians toiling in difficult conditions in

[97] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.16, Anlage C3, 2.
[98] SVG/DO, SDR 382038.

Germany. Of course, labour officials also recognised that workers who went into hiding were lost to the war economy.

The Military Administration continued to report that recruitment officials were enjoying significant success in returning contract-breakers to Germany. In the three-month period from August to October 1942 a total of 6,379 Belgians were reported to have broken their labour contracts. However, during the same period a total of 8,800 Belgian contract-breakers returned to Germany.[99] In some instances workers felt compelled to return due to financial pressures, while others came under pressure to return from family members who feared the repercussions if they failed to return to Germany. Perhaps the apparent success of the Military Administration in returning Belgian workers to Germany can be attributed to other factors during the first years of the occupation. A delay often ensued between a worker's flight or their failure to return to Germany after leave and this information being relayed to officials in Belgium. Thus workers who broke their contracts were perhaps willing in many cases to return to Germany by the time officials contacted them. Moreover, workers employed in seasonal industries were also prepared to return to Germany to work after the colder weather passed. In such cases the denial of leave proved counter-productive, as workers returned home without authorisation and were absent from their jobs in Germany for longer. Moreover, greater manpower was needed in Belgium and Germany to follow up the mounting number of contract-breakers.

In the final year of the occupation the Military Administration adopted harsher measures in response to the problem of contract-breakers. Military police visited the homes of contract-breakers, but such attempts to apprehend "fugitive workers" were often ineffective because the person they were seeking was not home or had moved elsewhere to avoid detection. By May 1944 the Military Administration resorted to carrying out raids in order to apprehend workers who broke their labour contracts.[100] The measures introduced by the Military Administration were often undermined by friends, family members or other members of the community who provided assistance, shelter or jobs to contract-breakers.

The Military Administration had very limited success in forcing women who broke their contracts to return to Germany, especially after the Military Administration put a stop to the conscription of women for labour contracts in

[99] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, Nr.22, D13.
[100] Ibid., *Tätigkeitsbericht,* Nr.29, 72.

industry in early 1943. Some Belgian women lived in fear that they would be returned to Germany, remaining in hiding until Belgium's liberation in September 1944, while others simply returned to their old jobs in Belgium or secured new jobs. Vitaline B was conscripted and sent to work as a chambermaid in Berlin. In June 1943 she was granted leave after just four months service and resumed employment in Belgium fifteen days after her return. Vitaline B recalled: "I did not return to Germany again, but I had to work for the occupiers until the end of the occupation".[101] Yvonne P was one of a group of female conscripts sent to work for electrical goods manufacturer Robert Karstens Elektrotechnische und Metallwarenfabrik in Berlin. Yvonne P returned to Belgium on leave in December 1943 and rather than return to Germany was permitted to resume her job with her previous employer.[102] Women who made concerted efforts to return home permanently were often successful. Georgette B was one of a group of female workers from a clothing manufacturer in Bruges who were conscripted and sent to work in Leipzig in November 1942. A doctor sympathetic to her plight provided a medical certificate stating that her mother was seriously ill so that Georgette B could request leave to return home. Georgette B's employer granted her leave to return home for one month on 27 January 1943. After returning to Belgium Georgette B requested an extension to her leave and an official visited her home to check on her mother's health. Officials then ordered Georgette B to attend the recruitment office and advised that she must return to Germany, as her mother was not seriously ill. Georgette B refused to return to Germany, arguing that there had been a cessation to the conscription of women. Georgette B remained a fugitive until the end of the occupation and military police attended her home, but did not succeed in arresting her because she was absent during their visit.[103] Through the determination of her family and her own defiance of recruitment officials, Georgette B succeeded in avoiding a return to Germany. But the colleagues Georgette B left behind in Leipzig were not so lucky. Julia V recalled: "As a result [of her failure to return] the control of workers who went on leave from the factory in which we worked became much stricter".[104] While male workers were in some instances detained at the recruitment

[101] SVG/DO, D48143/364212, Letter written by Vitaline B to the head of the commission assessing Statute applications (dated 30.12.1951).
[102] Ibid., D42937/337224, Sworn statement made by Yvonne P (dated 23.09.1953).
[103] Ibid., D36440/340581, Sworn statement made by Georgette B (dated 25.09.1950).
[104] Ibid., Sworn statement made by Julia V (dated 14.10.1950).

office and imprisoned until they could be deported to Germany, officials were apparently reluctant to detain female workers. In view of the end to the conscription of women for compulsory labour assignments in Germany, excepting labour assignments in domestic service, officials probably focussed on apprehending male workers. The public outcry provoked by the conscription of Belgian women probably also ensured that women who failed to return to Germany were not pursued rigorously. These cases illustrate that women who were granted leave to return home often managed to avoid going back to Germany.

Belgian workers often failed to return to Germany following a leave period claiming that they were unable to work due to illness. Workers recognised that reporting sick was a key way to avoid returning to Germany. Many Belgian doctors were sympathetic to the plight of Belgians working in Germany and were often willing to provide them with medical certificates testifying to their ill health. In some cases Belgian doctors testified that a worker's spouse or close relative was gravely ill so that they might be granted leave on compassionate grounds. On 6 April 1943 officials from the company health insurance fund at Mannesmannröhren-Werke AG in Düsseldorf wrote to officials at the Central German Health Insurance Fund for Belgium and Northern France regarding company employee Gustave M who failed to return from leave. Upon his arrival in Belgium he immediately reported that he was suffering from a stomach complaint. Company officials placed little stock by his claim that he was unfit for work:

> Gustave M now wants to skive off work (*Krankfeiern*) at our expense and escape from our control. We have the same sort of experience with virtually all employees who are granted leave and then refuse to return here. We are therefore refusing to pay any sickness benefits, and ask that you ensure that Gustave M returns here immediately, so that we may possibly transfer him to a hospital here [if necessary].[105]

Company officials refused to pay sickness benefits in an attempt to force the worker to return to Germany. Paradoxically, while Belgian workers were normally sent home in cases where they were expected to be unfit for work for an extended period of time, in this case company officials demanded the worker's return to Germany. This demand was highly impractical and is indicative of the frustration felt by German employers due to the increasing number of foreigners who reported sick while on leave. This case also illustrates that company officials did not trust medical

[105] Ibid., SDR 157894.

certificates provided by foreign doctors, preferring to seek their own assessment. Workers registered as sick were required to attend regular appointments with a doctor employed by the Military Administration. Doctors in the employ of the Military Administration assessed each worker's health and sought to return them to Germany as soon as they were fit enough to resume work.

12. *Arbeitsflucht* (absconding)

Absconding from one's workplace was a far less common form of breaching one's employment contract amongst Belgian workers. Escape was only really a possibility for those deployed in areas close to the German border, for example Belgian and Dutch workers working in the western regions of Germany. However, fewer Belgians managed to abscond and return home independently after greater controls were put in place on the railways and in border areas in early 1941. In spite of the risks associated with absconding and the limited prospects of success, some Belgians nevertheless attempted to return home illegally, even those who had been sent to areas far from the Belgian border. Walloons Antoine R, Julien T and Célestin L absconded from their jobs at AEG in Berlin on 23 August 1941. The young men were later apprehended after travelling on the roof of a direct train travelling from Berlin to Kreiensen in Lower Saxony. The trio were arrested in Kreiensen after they failed to produce a ticket on the railway platform. The men appeared before the court in Brunswick on 7 October 1941 and were found guilty of absconding (under the ordinance of 25 June 1938) and fare evasion (under Paragraph 265 of the German Criminal Code). The men were each sentenced to three months imprisonment.[106] Some Belgians who absconded managed to cross the Belgian-German border only to be arrested in Belgium. Young domestic servant Anni P left her job in Düsseldorf and sought to return home illegally. She was arrested by the *Gestapo* in Herstal, near Liège, on 20 December 1942 under suspicion of absconding and was sent to prison in Aachen two days later.[107] In August 1943 Fernand W absconded from his workplace in southern Germany with a French POW. After spending a night in a field the two men boarded a train destined for Saarbrücken on the French-German border, but were discovered during a security check. The two men were removed from the train in Idar-Oberstein, along with fifteen other men and a woman, and taken to the police

[106] Ibid., R.451/Tr.47.034, French translation of court transcript, case ref 7 Ds 500/41 A, Brunswick District Court.
[107] Ibid., SDR 336222.

headquarters, where they were interrogated. The men were simply returned to their employer once officials established from where they had absconded.[108] According to the instructions issued by Friedrich Jeckeln, Higher SS and Police Chief West in Düsseldorf, in February 1941, in instances where foreign workers left their workplace without authorisation the authorities should check their papers to determine where they were registered and transfer the worker to the local police authorities in the area where the worker had been resident.[109] Perhaps because they were faced with a mounting number of absconding workers as the war continued, the German authorities adopted a more pragmatic approach to deal with the problem of western Europeans who absconded.

13. Conflict in the workplace and sabotage

For the purposes of examining foreign workers' responses to the Nazi regime and its policies it is useful to adopt Detlev Peukert's four major categories of dissident behaviour: non-conformity, refusal, protest and resistance. Nonconformity can be defined as behaviour that ran counter to Nazism but was not directed against Nazism as a system. Nonconformity typically focused on matters relating to everyday life, such as wage levels and food shortages, and took the form of "grumbling". Nonconformity could develop into behaviour that can be described as refusal, such as absences from work. Like nonconformity, refusal was not necessarily directed against Nazism as a system, but was often characterised by a sense of conflicting socio-economic interests. This shrewd sense of conflicting socio-economic interests was a key feature of workers' behaviour. Protest was generally intended to make a public impact and commonly involved actions such as workplace sabotage. Within this framework resistance is defined as action intended to make a public impact and pose a basic challenge to the regime.[110] Foreign workers tended to focus on day-to-day survival in Germany and most dissident behaviour therefore stemmed from socio-economic issues. Foreign workers engaged in various forms of dissident

[108] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Fernand W.
[109] HStAD, RW37/23, Bl.36.
[110] Detlev JK Peukert, "Working-class Resistance: Problems and Option," in *Contending with Hitler: Varieties of German Resistance in the Third Reich*, ed. David Clay Large (Washington, D.C.; Cambridge: German Historical Institute; Cambridge University Press, 1991), 37.There is significant disagreement among historians with respect to the definition of resistance (*Widerstand*). Historians like Martin Broszat and Tim Mason have argued for much broader definitions. There is, however, merit in a Peukert's narrower definition, which ensures the concept of resistance does not become diluted.

behaviour, although actions that can be categorised as political resistance were rare. Herbert argues that employers and the German authorities "succeeded in limiting the phenomenon of loafing to individual incidences of reluctance or refusal to work. The latitude for joint opposition by foreigners remained extremely restricted, and sabotage was a rarity".[111] By contrast with Poles and *Ostarbeiter*, privileged western Europeans did not suffer from starvation and were not worked to the brink of physical exhaustion. Belgians therefore had good prospects of surviving and returning home once the war was over. In this respect Belgian workers had more to lose than Poles and *Ostarbeiter* who were often fighting for basic survival. Belgians understood that the greatest threat to their survival was posed by imprisonment or transfer to an AEL, and few engaged in high-risk activities that might result in serious punitive measures.

Supervision and surveillance were central elements of the strategy employed by employers to manage foreign employees. Herbert observes that "from the start of the war, the German authorities and the directors of numerous firms harboured suspicions that foreign workers were intentionally holding back on their labour power". Herbert emphasises that "this mistrust was a logical consequence of their own policy, and in the early years of the war, was as a rule based more on racial arrogance than any empirical assessment of performance".[112] The general distrust of foreign workers prompted many employers to implement a heavy workplace surveillance regime. Managers at Siemens emphasised:

> It is important that at every workstation foreign workers are looked after by an advisor or instructor in all cases, so that they come to grips with the particulars of the workstation as quickly as possible. Additionally, instructors can oversee the foreigner's work discipline and keep it under control.[113]

By maintaining strict supervision of foreign employees, managers sought to maintain the pace of work, increase productivity, limit work avoidance and prevent instances of sabotage. Workers who were considered lazy or troublesome were singled out for particular attention. Frans S recalled that "the Germans had no confidence in me and I was kept apart from my friends in a separate department, under the watchful eye of the boss".[114] Managers also emphasised that German workers could not be supervised by foreigners. The principle underlying these policies was that Germans

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[111] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 393.
[112] Ibid., 329.
[113] Quoted in Siegel, "Die Doppelte Rationalisierung," 18.
[114] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Frans S.

should feel that they were the master of foreign workers. The approach adopted by company managers discouraged solidarity between Germans and foreign workers. German employers also enlisted the help of German employees to manage foreign workers. One worker recalled: "There was never any question of sabotage amongst us fifteen Belgians in the work force, when the Germans and the Dutch did not budge. It was impossible to slow down [the pace] in a factory supervised by police, who also oversaw the Germans".[115] Belgians frequently emphasise that they were policed too closely to carry out acts of sabotage in the workplace without putting themselves at great risk of detection. In many workplaces employees were kept under constant surveillance, particularly in workplaces where POWs were deployed, and thus efforts to slow production or carry out acts of sabotage were extremely difficult.

Siemens called upon its German employees to contribute to Germany's war effort by playing an active role in the "small war" in the workplace. This analogy signalled to German workers that foreigners were the enemy. Paradoxically, at the same time that Goebbels called upon foreigners to join the pan-European fight against the Bolshevist enemy, the management implied that foreign workers were the enemy in the workplace. While Nazi ideology established a racial hierarchy, the approach adopted by the Siemens' management did not so much emphasise a hierarchy, but rather simply distinguished between German and foreign employees.

All Belgians were conscious that acts of sabotage would bring serious consequences if detected. One worker recalled: "There were lots of 'refusals' to work – the men were then sent to the 'Siegfried' line to build defences – many died in the bombardments".[116] Foreign workers often witnessed first-hand the consequences when colleagues were subjected to punitive action:

> Two young men who dropped a box had to go to a concentration camp. One died and the other one came back broken after his release. Nine men wanted to show their anger about the food they were given by dropping it in front of the canteen. They were sent to a punishment camp for a few weeks and were weak and skinny when they returned.[117]

Similar accounts about workers who were arrested by the *Gestapo* or sent to an AEL are provided by many Belgians. Workers commonly describe a colleague who was physically transformed by the experience; returning as a barely recognisable shadow of their former self. This physical transformation was generally the result of the

[115] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jean Bo.
[116] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Fernand Le.
[117] Ibid., AA1216/9, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Lodewijk C.

extremely harsh disciplinary regime at AELs and hard labour, as well as beatings in some cases. Workers suspected of committing some misdemeanour were often arrested in their barracks with their comrades looking on, while in other cases the *Gestapo* was called to deal with problems in the workplace. The behaviour of many foreign workers was shaped by the fear of the consequences of protest or carrying out acts of sabotage.

Peukert asserts that working-class social history during the Third Reich was characterised by "limited social conflict, partial conformity, and extensive breakdown of the forms of public behaviour and social organisation that might have fostered a unified resistance".[118] While some Belgians report that they frequently discussed means of sabotaging production with Belgian comrades, and some even report discussing sabotage with Russian colleagues, others report that fear of being reported prevented them from discussing sabotage at all. The possibility of sabotage was often only discussed amongst small groups of trusted friends. Female conscript Amata L recalled:

> We (two girls, myself and a female friend whose uncle worked in the same factory as my brother in Prenzlau) found out that when we touched something under the workbench with our soldering iron, it caused a short circuit and sometimes it took a few hours before they fixed it all. The Germans were disgruntled and barked at us that we had to "work for victory". We answered "*merde*".[119]

Amata L was one of a group of female employees from the Grand Bazaar department store in Antwerp deported to Berlin in December 1942. The women discussed sabotage amongst a small circle of trusted people whom they knew before they went to Germany. There were also divisions between Belgian conscripts and volunteers, with conscripts reporting that they feared volunteers would report them if they sabotaged production. Even workers who felt confident enough to talk about sabotage emphasise that discussion of sabotage was in most instances as far as it went: "Means [for carrying out sabotage] were discussed a lot, but [the idea] was usually nipped in the bud. If it was discovered the matter would be investigated thoroughly and punishment would soon follow".[120] While many workers considered sabotage, the German authorities and employers succeeded in preventing the

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[118] Peukert, "Working-class Resistance: Problems and Options," 45.
[119] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/12, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Amata L.
[120] Ibid., AA1216/4, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Roger D.

development of unified opposition amongst foreigners and therefore managed to stifle dissident behaviour to a considerable degree.

German employers had the authority to employ a range of disciplinary measures in response to breaches of work discipline. These disciplinary measures were characterised by penalties that escalated in severity, depending on the worker's misdemeanour and whether they had been disciplined previously. Disciplinary measures were at the disposal of managers included verbal and written warnings, the withdrawal of food provisions in company accommodation, monetary fines and the denial of leave. Fines were, for example, commonly used by employers to punish workers for a range of misdemeanours in the workplace from tardiness, smoking on the job, the theft of items from the workplace and failure to register absences from the workplace due to illness in a timely manner. At companies such as Siemens arrest cells were constructed at the company's camp. These arrest cells proved to be an effective means of disciplining workers and also served as a warning to others.[121] In cases where these punishments failed to bring an improvement in discipline managers might resort to referring recalcitrant workers to the external authorities – usually the *Gestapo* – with a written request for a penalty to be issued. The punishments meted out to workers were intended to serve an educative function and as a deterrent to others. Transfers to AELs and other court sentences were therefore often published on the "foreigners' notice board" in both German and the relevant foreign languages. Similar models were used by companies across Germany.

The accounts of Belgian workers, a significant proportion of whom were employed in large industrial concerns, highlight considerable variation in their treatment and how employers dealt with industrial matters. In some cases employers sought to handle cases of refusal to work internally, thereby avoiding the involvement of the *Gestapo*. Belgian Fernand W refused to go to work within a few weeks of his arrival in Darmstadt. Each day a colleague who acted as an interpreter came to see him to check if he was capable of going to work, but Fernand W replied: "No, stop pestering me!" At midday he ate lunch with his colleagues in the canteen. After a few days Fernand W was called up to the office and the director told him through an interpreter that he would no longer receive food and it would be a matter for the *Gestapo*. In a last-ditch attempt to resolve the matter Fernand W's employer

[121] Siegel, "Die Doppelte Rationalisierung," 21.

sent a doctor to speak to Fernand W. The French-speaking doctor told him, "I advise you to resume your work because otherwise you will have troubles. You do your bit and for my part I will try to organise an easier job, less dirty. Be patient". Fernand W took the doctor's advice and he was transferred to another job three weeks later.[122] Fernand W's refusal to work was a risky strategy, which could have easily landed him in an AEL, but his stubborn approach ultimately paid off and he secured a better job through the assistance of the German doctor. This case clearly illustrates that some German doctors acted in good faith and genuinely tried to help foreign workers in their care. This example also shows that some employers exercised their own judgement and sought to deal with recalcitrant workers internally.

Other employers resorted to punitive measures. Conscript Jean V, who worked at a Berlin engineering firm, recalled: "I was punished twice in Germany for acts of sabotage, each time I got a few days locked up in the bunker without food".[123] This case demonstrates that employers who wished to deal with industrial matters internally were also able to draw on more repressive measures to punish workers. The transfer of workers to an AEL meant that their employer lost their labour, for at least a number of weeks, and some employers therefore probably only involved the *Gestapo* as a last resort, even when dealing with more serious offences. By contrast, other employers maintained a harsh disciplinary regime and did not hesitate to call upon the *Gestapo*, "My friend who turned up one or two minutes late three or four mornings was sent to the *Gestapo* in Bonn for eight days".[124] Some employers cracked down on workers who flouted workplace discipline, signalling to others that even minor breaches of workplace rules would not be tolerated. The Nazi authorities gave employers a free hand in the workplace and the disciplinary regime that reigned in workplaces was therefore shaped to a significant degree by the approach adopted by individual company managers.

Protest actions by foreign workers usually related to socio-economic issues. Belgians typically protested due to dissatisfaction with food provisions or accommodation, and their protests most often took the form of refusal to work. Emile S recalled:

> We, several of my companions and I, decided that we would not work in the afternoon. We returned to work, but crossed our arms... I explained in the

[122] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Fernand W.
[123] SVG/DO, SDR 177754 & D46719/367363, Sworn statement made by Jean V (dated 08.06.1954).
[124] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jean Bo.

> best German possible that our team would not work without food. The supervisor of the team, an old Nazi, tried his best to glare and ranted and raved, but we would not do anything.[125]

In another case, a group of Belgian workers rebelled when they were told they had to move to another barracks, which was infested with lice:

> We refused to leave our lodgings. They wanted to expel us [from the barracks], we barricaded ourselves in with tables and cupboards and this until 19.00. Finally the barracks were surrounded and a member of the factory police demanded to speak to us to give us a final deadline, a veteran from 1914-1918 who insisted that he understood our situation... He made us understand that without his intervention with the director to obtain a final delay the SS would have certainly already brought us to our senses with disastrous consequences. He also appealed to our commonsense. We capitulated, but hundreds of hours were lost that day.[126]

For the sake of putting an end to the stand-off and avoiding more disruption, the company adopted pragmatic approach. In these cases the workers' grievance related to intolerable living conditions or perceived unjust treatment. Western Europeans defended what they regarded as their basic entitlement to adequate food provisions and housing. These examples clearly illustrate that privileged western Europeans had the confidence to voice criticisms, and staunchly defended their rights in the face of deteriorating wartime conditions. These examples also show that the workers did not always face serious consequences for their actions and German employers did not necessarily adopt a heavy-handed approach in response to protests. The fact that these workers did not face severe penalties could be interpreted as a tacit admission by their employer that the withdrawal of their labour was in some ways justified.

Spoerer emphasises that western Europeans, in particular, were accustomed to strong trade unionism, which, combined with their relatively high position in the Nazi racial hierarchy, gave them greater confidence to voice criticisms.[127] However, while there was a tradition of strong trade unionism and industrial action in Belgium, a significant proportion of Belgian conscripts were young men, especially those conscripted through the call-up of whole age-groups. Lucian A reported that he and his colleagues did not carry out acts of sabotage because "everyone was very young and not experienced enough to organise things. No sabotage that I am aware of, only by the Russians (breaking things, causing electrical break-downs etc.)".[128] While

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[125] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Emile S.
[126] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Fernand G.
[127] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 168.
[128] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/12, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Lucian A.

some younger workers had probably been integrated into workers' organisations in Belgium to some degree, it was unlikely that younger workers had assumed leadership roles or had experience in organising industrial action. Maltreated Russian and Polish workers had less to lose than privileged western European workers, and perhaps physical exhaustion and despair prompted them to carry out sabotage in order simply to get a break from work for a few hours.

Loafing and work avoidance was a significant problem for German employers. Foreign workers employed various methods to avoid work. One Belgian recalled: "The easiest way and also the most common way was to go to the bathroom all day and the factory police had trouble chasing out all the 'long-sitters'".[129] Other methods employed by foreign workers to avoid work included reporting ill and time wasting, for example taking as long as possible when undertaking errands in the workplace, and hiding. In some cases workers resorted to extreme measures to avoid work. Georges M recalled, "I asked certain colleagues to mutilate my fingers... and all this in order to avoid working for the enemy. Certain [colleagues] broke an arm after several painful tentative attempts".[130] Belgians who were injured might avoid work for a few days, while those who managed to inflict more serious injuries upon themselves might be unable to work and would stand a good chance of being sent home.

Employers' distrust of foreign workers meant that relatively minor offences might be reported as sabotage by overzealous managers. The following account illustrates how loafing on the job could be built up into a more serious offence:

> One Sunday I was on anti-aircraft duty [watching for] potential incendiaries and I wanted to escape having to help change the wagons, so I hid in my work building and wrote a letter to my fiancée. My supervisor took me by surprise. He informed the director. I was called up to the office the day after regarding the matter. Accused of sabotage, threatened with the *Gestapo* and all the rest... the camp commander Schmidt came to defend me before the director.[131]

Jean Bo sought to avoid work and his behaviour is probably partly the response of a disgruntled worker who was frustrated by the requirement that employees work on Sundays. However, his supervisor characterised his actions as an act of sabotage. This example demonstrates that employers' concerns about the work ethic of foreign

[129] Ibid., AA1216/13, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Alfons P.
[130] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Georges M.
[131] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jean Bo.

workers meant that any actions that threatened productivity might be construed as acts of sabotage. Jean Bo fortunately avoided serious consequences through the support of the camp commander.

Louis Z who worked in a foundry in Mölkau near Leipzig emphasised that opportunities for sabotage were often very limited:

> Sabotage was practically unthinkable in a foundry without putting the lives of your comrades in danger. A "go-slow" was applied by all the foreign workers in spite of the threats. Based on the information provided by his infamous second in command, the camp commander sent those who were supposed to be the ring leaders to Riebeckstrasse, where a strong man returned at the end of three days weak and unrecognisable.[132]

This account illustrates that acts of sabotage were potentially very dangerous from the perspective of workplace safety. These accounts also emphasise that sabotage was regarded as high-risk and many foreign workers therefore opted for "go-slows" rather than engage in potentially riskier activities. Another worker recalled, "It was not direct sabotage in reality. When there was a fault or a defect somewhere, it was not mentioned or passed on. People left this to the foremen. In that way tens of thousands of grenades were produced that were too thin or too short".[133] Poor performance or the failure to inform one's foreman about defects or problems with the production process slowed production and were relatively low-risk.

Foreign workers also exploited language barriers to avoid work or sabotage production. François V recalled, "During this period you could not speak of bilingualism, arrangements were perfect from the point of view of sabotaging our work and doing as little work as possible".[134] In workplaces where there were no interpreters, foreign workers might discuss possibilities for sabotaging production without fearing that they could be understood. Moreover, by pretending not to understand instructions that were issued, foreign workers could slow or sabotage production. Linguistic difficulties could always be blamed for low productivity or damage to tools or machinery that stalled production. One worker recalled, "[The foreman] said I was a saboteur and a lazy swine because I was doing so little and I was always away from my work".[135] And while foremen frequently held suspicions about sabotage, this was usually difficult to prove. Workers used various methods to

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[132] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Louis Z.
[133] Ibid., AA1216/10, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Joannes H.
[134] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, François V.
[135] Ibid., AA1216/5, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Maurice L.

slow production, produce inferior goods or disrupt work. Crucially, workers adopted methods that were difficult to detect and were therefore comparatively low-risk activities.

Fear and strict supervision in the workplace limited opportunities for organised sabotage. Fernand K suggested that acts of sabotage were very common amongst foreign workers: "I believe everyone [sabotaged production] according to the means available to them, without talking to others about it in order to avoid indiscretions".[136] Fernand K's account echoes the concerns of the German authorities and many employers with respect to the productivity levels of foreign workers. While Fernand K's account clearly overstates the frequency of acts of sabotage committed by foreign workers, he makes a very valid point with regard to the fact that many foreign workers did not discuss sabotage and that acts of sabotage carried out by individuals were probably more common. Individual acts of sabotage were in many cases highly effective and had a considerable impact on productivity levels. While the German population and Nazi authorities feared an uprising of foreigners during the final phases of the war, Herbert argues that "foreigners were too divided among themselves to organise such a rebellion". Herbert observes that "individual resistance was more feasible than collective, and the instructions issued by the Allies were along those lines".[137] This view was also repeated in the accounts of Belgian workers. Felix G emphasised that acts of sabotage were not organised, "No methods of sabotage were agreed between workers – everyone did it his own way. I faked that my right hand was paralysed and could not do much. Sometimes people broke things or created a bit of chaos".[138] Fear prevented many workers from discussing sabotage amongst a wider circle of people and therefore limited the extent to which unified opposition could be fostered. These examples clearly show that the German authorities succeeded to a considerable degree in preventing foreign workers' opposition from coalescing into forms of behaviour that might pose a fundamental challenge to the regime, such as unified rebellion.

14. Relations with German work colleagues

Belgian workers' accounts illustrate that their treatment in the workplace varied greatly and often depended upon individual personalities. Belgians emphasised that

[136] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Fernand K.
[137] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 394.
[138] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/13, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Felix G.

some of their German colleagues were opposed to the Nazi regime and therefore treated them well, while others suggested that colleagues who were fervent Nazis made their work life harder. One worker observed, "The function of the foreman varied because there were good and bad foreman (did not give workers freedom)".[139] While there is no suggestion of ill-treatment, the worker's account emphasises that foremen who maintained strict discipline, and did not allow workers any freedom, made their work life more difficult. Another worker recalled that the foreman in charge was "a just and correct man. His function was to distribute work, to oversee and check [work] – as well as keeping us under surveillance".[140] Reading between the lines, it is apparent that some Belgians felt that the treatment they received from their supervisors in Germany was not dissimilar from the treatment they might receive in Belgian workplaces.

A number of Belgians emphasise that they avoided punishment because a German work colleague, foreman or camp commander intervened on their behalf. Maurice L recalled that his foreman frequently accused him of laziness and sabotage; however, the foreman's accusations never went any further because "the other German work colleagues liked me and would not say anything negative to the foreman about me".[141] Belgian workers' experiences with German colleagues often proved that "not all Germans were Nazis".[142] Undoubtedly some German foremen acted out of self-interest, intervening to protect someone they regarded as a good worker. But others perhaps acted out of human instinct, seeking to protect a foreign worker whom they regarded as a good colleague and even a friend.

While many Belgians were wary of German work colleagues and feared they would report them if they carried out acts of sabotage, some Belgians developed strong friendships with colleagues whom they regarded as "good Germans". Jacques V recalled, "I formed a team with a 'good German' from Aachen who gave me his ration of cigarettes. The two of us went to the toilets together and took as long as we could, and when we returned he always managed to get away with it and I never had any problems".[143] Jan A recalled that after he received a package from home containing cigarettes, "I also gave a cigarette to our German mate who had never

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[139] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Simon D.
[140] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Victor B.
[141] Ibid., AA1216/5 *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Maurice L.
[142] Ibid., AA1216/13 *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Alfons P.
[143] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jacques V.

smoked a cigarette like it and to my Russian mate".[144] Jules C was treated kindly by his foreman whose son had died in Russia and who was opposed to the Nazi regime and the war, recalling: "My boss often invited me to eat at his place".[145] Both men had suffered as a consequence of the war, and therefore found common ground. In spite of efforts to limit solidarity between Germans and foreigners, friendships did nevertheless develop. Mutual acts of kindness and solidarity between Germans and foreigners did not, however, generally escalate into acts that could be described as collective resistance.

15. Conclusions

Belgians, both Flemings and Walloons, enjoyed a privileged status as western Europeans. On a basic level, Belgians were afforded better treatment and greater employment rights and protection than their counterparts from Poland and eastern Europe. This improved their prospects of surviving the war and returning home to their families at the end of the war immeasurably. The material benefits western European workers enjoyed, including near wage parity with Germans, also significantly improved their situation. Higher earnings and the greater confidence that came with their status as western Europeans gave Belgian workers greater access to the black market – a key means of obtaining additional food and other goods.

Belgians guarded the privileges they enjoyed, defending their living and working conditions in the face of deteriorating wartime conditions, and frequently using their greater rights to their own advantage. Belgians often used leave, sickness and pregnancy as a means to escape working in wartime Germany and many were successful. Workers' grievances with respect to food and living conditions sometimes escalated into protests. However, many Belgians feared the consequences of sabotage and resistance and therefore often avoided higher risk activities and joint actions. Many Belgians were probably also reluctant to engage in activities that might jeopardise their chances of obtaining leave, as obtaining leave to return home represented the best opportunity of escaping Germany. Employers for their part sought to avoid conflict in the workplace, and in cases of rebellion or protest employers often adopted a pragmatic approach in order to minimise the impact on productivity. Fear and strict supervision prevented many Belgians from discussing

[144] Ibid., AA1216/60, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jan A, diary entry 29.05.1943.
[145] Ibid., AA1216/1 *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jules C.

sabotage amongst a wider circle of people and therefore limited the extent to which unified opposition could be fostered. The German authorities therefore succeeded to a considerable degree in preventing dissident behaviour from coalescing into forms of behaviour that might pose a challenge to the regime.

CHAPTER FOUR:
Belgian workers in Berlin

The cosmopolitan metropolis Berlin was Germany's *Reichshauptstadt* or capital city and heart of the centralised Nazi state. Berlin was also central to the Nazis' vision and plans for the future. The Nazis envisaged a racially pure state that would span from Jutland to the Brenner and from the Riga Dom to the Strasburger Kirche. Berlin – renamed Germania – would form the heart of the Nazis' new empire and would be a world capital. Berlin is inextricably linked to key events during the Nazis' reign from their seizure of power in January 1933 to the *Reichstag* fire, the 1936 Olympics, key speeches en route to war given by Hitler and Goebbels at the Berlin *Sportspalast*, the Wannsee Conference in January 1942 that sealed the fate of European Jewry, Hitler's suicide in April 1945, and finally Germany's defeat as the Red Army pounded the city into surrender.

The seat of the regime's centralised administration, Berlin housed hundreds of ministries, departments, offices and institutes. Berlin was the nerve centre of Germany's military-industrial complex, housing the headquarters of all the military service branches, as well as almost a hundred barracks and depots.[1] Berlin was also the hub of Germany's communication network with its rail lines, airports and canal system. The city's industry played a vital role in war production. More than half of Germany's entire electrical industry was located in Berlin, which hosted the huge Siemens complex, ten Allgemeine Elektricitäts-Gesellschaft (AEG) plants and electrical goods manufacturers Telefunken, C Lorenz AG and Bosch GmbH – all of which produced crucial military components. The Alkett Altmärkische Kettenwerke GmbH factory in Spandau produced self-propelled guns and half of the *Wehrmacht's* field artillery. Rheinmetall-Borsig produced rolling stock, locomotives, and heavy artillery. The Deutsche Waffen und Munitions (DWM) factory in the northern district of Wittenau produced small arms, ammunition and mortars. The Auto Union factories in Spandau and Halensee produced tank chassis. BMW's factory in Spandau produced a range of vehicles for the military and Heinkel, Henschel, Flettner, Focke-Wulf and Dornier manufactured bomber planes, attack aircraft and

[1] David Clay Large, *Berlin* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 326.

aeroplane parts. During the war the Daimler Benz AG plant in Berlin-Marienfelde produced vehicles, a series of aircraft, tank and submarine engines, as well as parts for German arms. Additionally, smaller companies and workshops in the city also produced vital components. Berlin's importance both as the nation's administrative capital and its vital role in war production sealed the city's fate as a key target in the Allied forces' strategic bombing campaign.

This chapter focuses on the experiences of Belgian workers in Berlin through the examination of records relating to housing, health, mortality, the social life of Belgians in Berlin, relations between Belgian and German civilians, and crime and punishment. In particular, the relationship between policy and practice will be considered. While it is clear that Flemings and Walloons enjoyed privileged treatment as western Europeans, what is less clear is to what extent this was shaped by Nazi racial policies and to what extent other factors played a role. It will be argued that the privileged position western Europeans enjoyed enabled them to improve their position proactively and therefore ensured that they benefited indirectly in myriad less obvious ways. Many western European workers enjoyed better wages and working conditions by virtue of the fact that they were highly skilled. Linguistic skills were also a key factor in the experiences of foreign workers and helped many to secure better living and working conditions. The German authorities' treatment of Flemings and Walloons will be also considered, focussing on the question of whether Flemings and Walloons were treated differently and to what extent their treatment reflected the strictures of a Nazi racial doctrine that upheld the value of "Nordic" peoples above others. It will be argued that German administrators and employers did not necessarily recognise the distinction between "Nordic" Flemings and French-speaking Walloons. Heusler has observed that foreigners employed by smaller businesses generally fared better than those employed by larger companies, arguing that it was precisely in small and medium-sized enterprises that a sense of loyalty could prevail and foreign workers could be viewed as colleagues, thus relativising National Socialist discrimination against racial aliens.[2] It will be argued that the reach of the Nazi authorities did not extend into the interactions between ordinary Germans and foreigners, and thus the

[2] Heusler, *Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft*, 424.

approach adopted by individual Germans varied a great deal, even within larger enterprises.

1. Dimensions of the *Ausländereinsatz* in Berlin

While there was a significant increase in the number of foreign workers deployed in German agriculture from autumn 1939, the number of foreigners deployed in heavily industrialised Berlin rose more gradually. In January 1941 there were just 19,000 foreigners working in Berlin; however, one year later the number of foreign workers in Berlin ballooned to 140,000. The arrival of civilian workers from the USSR marked a turning point in the deployment of foreign workers in Berlin. Berlin's industry was given precedence over other parts of Germany with respect to the allocation of foreign labour. The number of foreign workers in Berlin grew steadily from 170,000 in July 1942 to 386,000 in August 1943.

In the summer of 1943 foreign workers represented 20 percent of Berlin's workforce; in the armaments industry foreign civilian workers and prisoners of war represented 28 percent of the workforce, and in some manufacturing companies foreigners represented an even higher percentage of the workforce. At the Siemens Kleinbauwerk 1 and Elektromotorenwerk 1 plants in Berlin foreign workers represented a total of 44.1 percent of workers in September 1943, while POWs and prisoners represented a further 4.2 percent of company employees.[3] After reaching its highpoint in the summer of 1943 the number of foreign workers in Berlin began to drop due to the relocation of some Berlin industrial concerns to areas that were less affected by bombing. Despite the transfer of many foreign workers to other parts of the Reich, the registry of labour books that had been issued in the late summer of 1944 show that 6.3 percent of foreign civilians working in the Reich were deployed in Berlin.[4] At the end of 1944 there were approximately 400,000 foreign workers working in Berlin.[5] While the number of foreign workers in Berlin rose, the city's population dropped from approximately 4.3 million on the eve of the Second World War to 2.8 million, due to the call-up of the city's men for military service and

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[3] Siegel, "Die Doppelte Rationalisierung," 16.
[4] Figures quoted from Helmut Bräutigam, "Zwangsarbeit in Berlin, 1938-1945 " in *Zwangsarbeit in Berlin, 1938-1945*, ed. Arbeitskreis Berliner Regionalmuseen (Berlin: Metropol, 2003), 31-3.
[5] Gabriele Layer-Jung, "Überwachung und Bestrafung in Wehrwirtschaftsbetrieben: Beispiele aus Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg," in ibid., 85.

evacuation of non-working women, children and the elderly.[6] This demographic shift led to fears amongst the city's police force that, with Germany's defeat looming, Berlin's foreigner population would develop into a hostile internal front.

The call-up of workers to the armed services and the insatiable demand for skilled workers in Berlin's industrial plants prompted labour officials to embark on a drive to bring skilled western European workers to the city. *L'Effort Wallon* – a weekly newspaper published by the DAF for French-speaking Walloons in Germany – was used as a vehicle for a recruitment campaign to attract Belgian workers to Berlin.[7] Jean Miroir sang the praises of the city, "The whole of Berlin's population has taken on the character of war". Miroir described Berlin as a modern bustling world city, rivalling New York with its vast transport network and traffic signalling system. Miroir emphasised the pace of life in Berlin, the strong work ethic of the city's workers, as well as the great sights and leisure activities the city could offer:

> One could write long meditations on the rhythm of Berlin. It is a rhythm of work, which manifests itself behind the walls of the factories, the workshops, the offices. But come Sunday those [working in Berlin] will find themselves amongst the millions of people in the streets with the admirable sites, which make Berlin the great world capital with the most marvellous belt of fresh air [that surrounds the city], or escape towards this outskirts of the city. When one sees the crowd that heads towards banks of Wannsee, Müggelsee or towards *Reichsportfeld*,[8] even in times of war, one understands that it was necessary to build special stations to drain these multitudes.[9]

Miroir's article appealed directly to Walloons many of whom were highly skilled industrial workers, who were badly needed in Berlin's industry. Efforts to attract western Europeans to accept labour assignments in Germany during the first years of the occupation paid dividends. Analysis of the personal files of 204 Belgians who worked in Berlin during the war indicates that the majority of Belgian men and women working in Berlin went to Germany voluntarily – most taking up their first

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[6] Cord Pagenstecher, "Lagerlisten und Erinnerungsberichte. Neue Quellen zur Topografie und ärztlichen Betreuung der Berliner Zwangsarbeiterlager," in *Medizin und Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus. Einsatz und Behandlung von "Ausländern" im Gesundheitswesen*, ed. Andreas Frewer and Günther Siedbürger (Frankfurt a.M.: 2004), 103.

[7] The publication was controlled by supporters of the influential pressure group the *Deutschwallonische Arbeitsgemeinschaft* (DeWag), which was responsible for the care and welfare of Walloon workers in Germany. A rival collaborationist group to the Rexist movement, the supporters of DeWag used *L'Effort Wallon* to ridicule the Rexist leader Léon Degrelle. Degrelle instigated a coup within *L'Effort Wallon* whereby control was transferred to a pro-Rexist editor-in-chief. Conway, *Collaboration in Belgium*, 199.

[8] National sport stadium.

[9] CEGES/SOMA, BCR292 GR, Jean Miroir, "Le rythme de Berlin: Pensées sur la circulation", *L'Effort Wallon*, Nr.50, 13.12.1942.

labour assignment in 1941/1942 prior to the introduction of conscription in October 1942 (see Appendix 11 on page 331 and Figure). Furthermore, over half of the women were married and were therefore not subject to conscription, providing further evidence that a significant proportion of Belgians in Berlin were volunteers (see Table 5 on page 178). A quarter of the sample undertook more than one labour assignment in Germany, thirty-seven undertaking labour assignments in another part of Germany. Some Belgians worked in Berlin for just a few months; however, many more spent most of the occupation years working in Germany. While gaps in the available records mean that it is not possible to determine how many months an individual spent in Germany, recording the calendar years in which an individual Belgian worked in Germany, I have found that those who worked in Berlin spent time working in Germany in three calendar years on average. The median year of birth of Belgian men and women working in Berlin was 1914 and 1920 respectively (see Figure 5 on page 179).

Figure 4: Year of first labour assignment in Germany

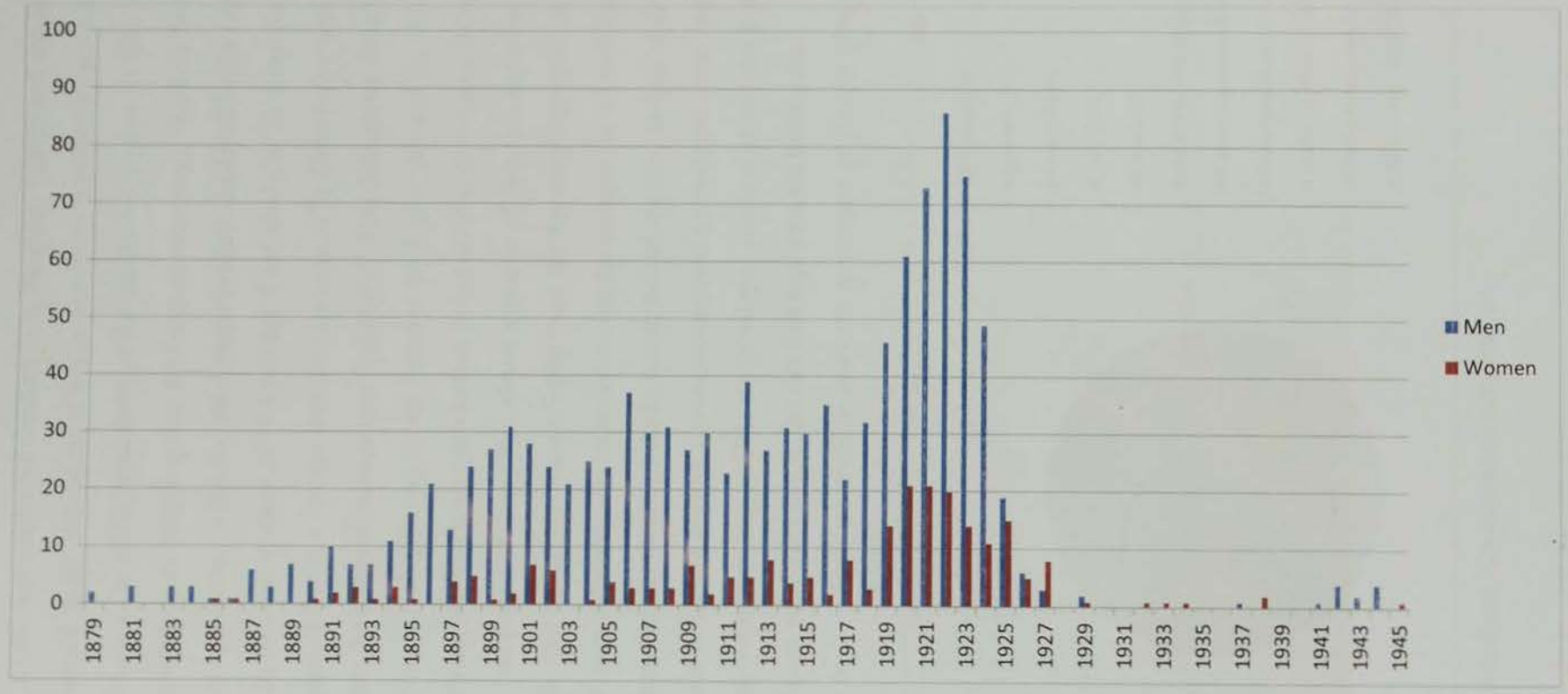
Source: Author's statistics based on research into individual files from the SVG/DO.

Table 5: Categorisation of Belgians deployed in Berlin based on a sample of 204 files

Category	*Men*	*Percentage*	*Women*	*Percentage*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Conscript	21	13.55	3	6.12	24	11.76
Volunteer	130	83.87	45	91.84	175	85.78
Conscript/volunteer	1	0.65	1	2.04	2	0.98
Economic migrant (living in Germany before 1940)	1	0.65	0	0	1	0.49
Unclear	2	1.29	0	0	2	0.98
	155	75.98	49	24.02		

Source: Table based on sampling of individual workers' files from SVG/DO.

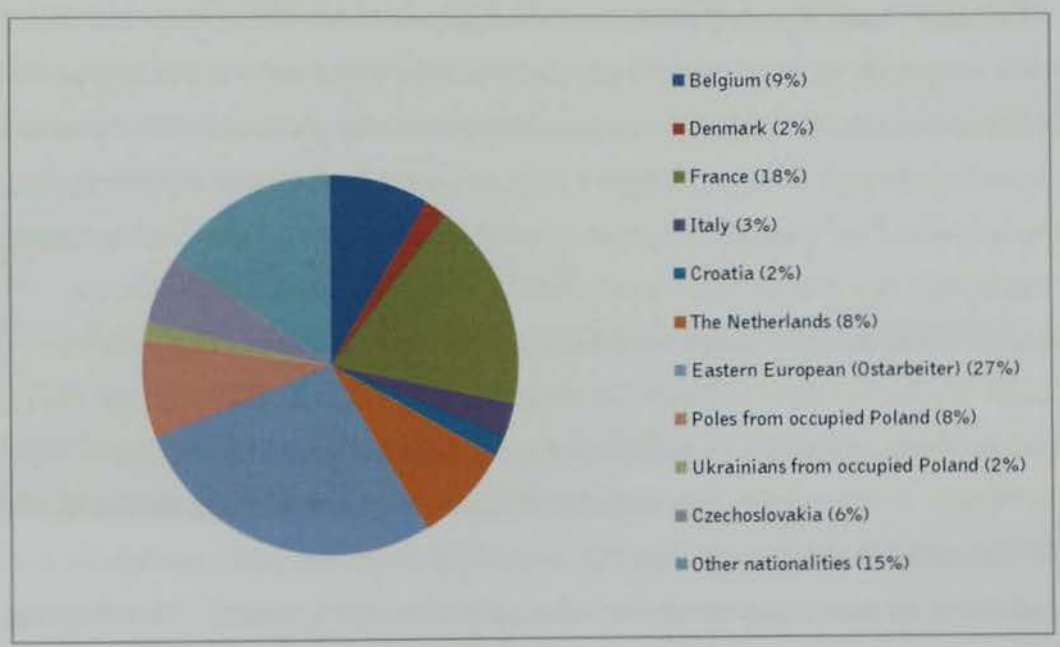
Figure 5: Year of birth of Belgians living in Berlin, 1940-1945



Source: Statistics based on SVG/DO, R.429/Tr.54.854 – list of Belgian nationals resident in Berlin-Neukölln and Berlin-Kreuzberg

As the war continued workers from Belgium, France and the Netherlands represented a major contingent of Berlin's working population (see Appendix 12 on page 331 for a statistical breakdown of the number of foreign civilian versus native German workers employed across the German economy). Workers from these countries represented a third of the foreign workers deployed in the capital – well above the national average of 18.4 percent. Conversely, at 36.4 percent, the percentage of Berlin's foreign workers represented by *Ostarbeiter* was significantly lower that the national average (see Figure 6).[10] This divergence from the national picture can probably be largely attributed to the higher demand for skilled workers in the electrical and machinery production industries that dominated industry in Berlin. Figure 7 on page 182 shows that almost a quarter of Belgians registered in Berlin's Neukölln and Kreuzberg districts came from the Antwerp region where the highest level of unemployment was recorded during the occupation. Significant numbers also came from Belgium's most heavily industrialised regions, including Brussels, Namur and Hainaut. Skilled western Europeans enjoyed a privileged status and secured jobs that attracted higher wages. Thus the privileged position of western Europeans was often further reinforced due to the fact that they secured better jobs.

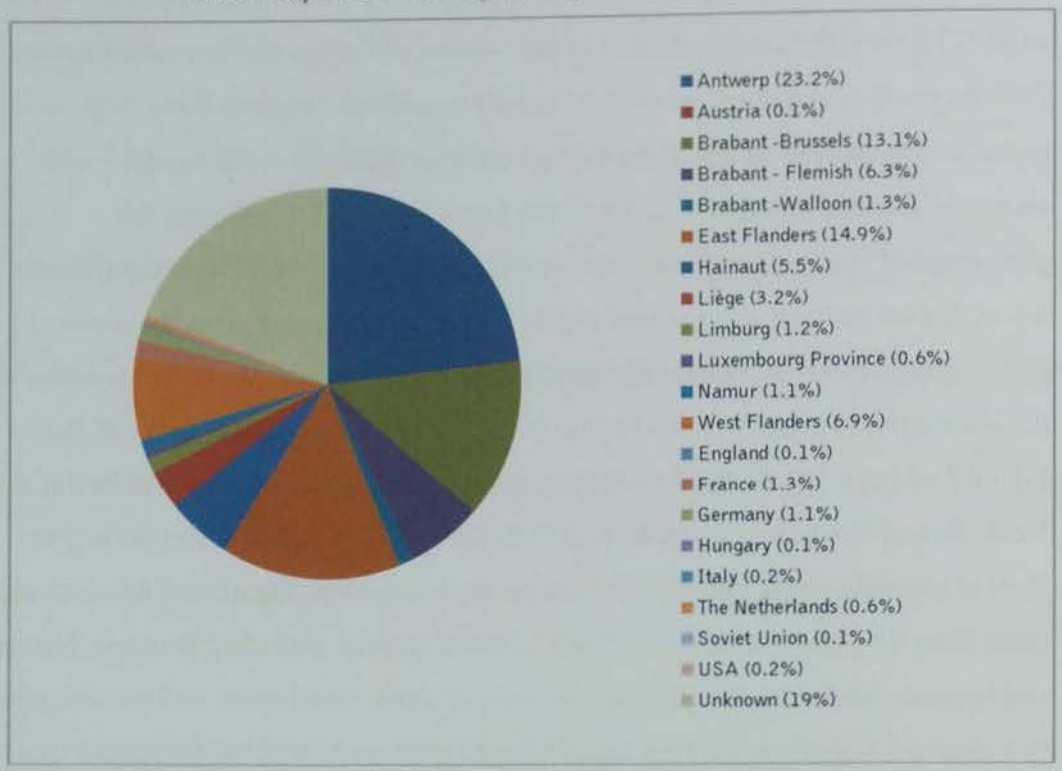
Figure 6: Foreign civilian workers employed in Berlin (September 1944)



Source: Bräutigam, "Zwangsarbeit in Berlin", 31.

[10] Bräutigam, "Zwangsarbeit in Berlin," 33.

Figure 7: Belgians deployed in Berlin's Kreuzberg and Neukölln districts, 1939-1945, by region of birth



Source: Statistics based on SVG/DO, R.429/Tr.54.854

2. Arrival in Berlin

The journey from departure points across Belgium to Berlin was arduous and usually took a day or more. Worker transports stopped at the transit camp in Aachen, as well as stopping en route to allow passengers destined for other destinations to disembark. Travelling through the night, Belgians often arrived in Berlin late at night or in the early hours of the morning, hungry and tired from the journey. Their final destination was usually one of three transit camps established in the Brandenburg area: the Berlin-Wilhelmshagen transit camp located to the east of Berlin in Köpenick; the *Lager* Nordmarkstrasse in Prenzlauer Berg served as a transit camp from late 1941; and the Potsdam-Rehbrücke transit camp in the woods close to the Potsdam-Rehbrücke railway station. The majority of those who passed through the Berlin-Wilhelmshagen transit camp were Polish and Soviet workers, while a smaller number of western European workers also passed through the camp.[11] The Potsdam-

[11] Pagenstecher, "Lagerlisten und Erinnerungsberichte," 105. Cf. Claus-Dieter Sprink, "Das System der Durchgangslager für ausländische Arbeitskräfte im Berliner Raum," in *Zwangsarbeit in Berlin, 1938-1945* ed. Arbeitskreis Berliner Regionalmuseen (Berlin: Metropol, 2003), 75. Sprink suggests that the camp had a capacity of 4,800 residents.

Rehbrücke transit camp was established in early 1943 in order to process the increasing number of workers arriving from occupied territories and was the arrival station for many workers arriving from western Europe.

Arrival at a transit camp served as a baptism of fire. These were massive facilities, accommodating hundreds and often operating well beyond their capacity. According to the account of young Dutch worker Klaus Brinks, the narrow timber beds at the camp had to be shared at the Potsdam-Rehbrücke camp, "We had to tie ourselves to each other so that we did not fall down. No mattress and no cover (in February)".[12] Belgian conscript Robert Q who arrived in Berlin in April 1943 recalled:

> We were received at a transit camp in Berlin Potsdam. The camp was relatively clean, but it gave a bad impression because it was surrounded by barbed wire and there were many volunteers (not only Belgians) who had a tendency to act like the police.[13]

Their arrival at a closed camp surrounded by a barbed wire fence came as an unpleasant shock to many new arrivals. Others described the camp as the "central slave market". [14] Transit camps functioned as labour exchanges – or slave markets in the eyes of many foreign workers – with employers attending the camp to select workers. Newly arrived workers stayed at transit camps for anything from a few hours to a couple of weeks before they were assigned to employers across Berlin. In other cases workers were transferred directly to their assigned employer upon their arrival in Berlin. Leaving the transit camp, singly or in groups, foreign workers were undoubtedly filled with apprehension about what lay ahead.

3. Housing and living conditions

German cities hosted hundreds of camps during the war years and Berlin was no exception. Research on the housing of foreign workers in Berlin has led to the identification of over 1,000 camps and approximately 3,000 addresses where foreign workers were housed during the war.[15] The figures in Table 6 on page 184 illustrate how the influx of workers led to a rapid expansion of the number of camps in Berlin during the war. By early 1943 officials from the various districts of Berlin had registered a total of 1,010 camps, with foreigners and their workplaces spread across

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[12] Quoted in Almuth Püschel, *Zwangsarbeit in Potsdam: Fremdarbeiter und Kriegsgefangene, Dokumentation*, 1. Aufl ed., Verwehte Spuren (Wilhelmshorst: Märkischer Verlag, 2002), 70.
[13] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Robert Q.
[14] Dutch conscripted student Maarten Mourik quoted in Püschel, *Zwangsarbeit in Potsdam*, 65.
[15] Pagenstecher, "Lagerlisten und Erinnerungsberichte," 100.

all administrative districts.[16] Rainer Kubatzki emphasises: "With the exception of the old middle-class residential areas in Berlin-Zehlendorf and the city centre, across the whole city there was a camp virtually just around the corner".[17] Even before the First World War the centre of the city had become established as Berlin's administrative centre and business district, while most inhabitants resided in Berlin's outlying suburbs. This division was later reflected in the distribution of camps in the city. Appendices 13 and 14 on pages 332-3 illustrate that the highest concentration of foreign workers and largest camps were located in the outlying suburbs and districts just outside Berlin, including Charlottenburg, Tempelhof, Köpenick, Pankow-Schönholz, Reinickendorf, Weißensee, Lichtenberg and Treptow. By contrast with working-class districts, only a small number of camps were established in middle-class districts like Berlin-Zehlendorf. A list of Belgians registered with the police station in Berlin-Zehlendorf during the war indicates that 197 Belgians were registered in the district.[18]

Table 6: The number of camps in Berlin

	Number of camps
5 September 1940	35
30 April 1941	400
12 March 1942	700
Early 1943	1,010

Source: Helmut Bräutigam, "Zwangsarbeit in Berlin", 35.

Foreign workers who were resident in inner-city districts were generally housed in buildings such as restaurants, ballrooms and halls that were converted for the purpose of accommodating foreign workers, or in private accommodation, whereas large camps with barracks housing thousands of workers were generally built in outlying districts and outside the city. There was an overrepresentation of smaller companies in the inner city districts of Berlin such as Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain, which helps to explain the number of Belgians who lived outside

[16] This figure is based on the number of camps registered with the Main Health Office by early 1943, which sent the district health departments a form requiring that officials provide details of all camps in their district in November 1942. Ibid., 91-2.

[17] Rainer Kubatzki, "Irgendein Lager gleich um die Ecke," *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 9, no. 9 (2000): 73. Also see Kubatzki, *Zwangsarbeiter- und Kriegsgefangenenlager*.

[18] SVG/DO, R.429/Tr.8797, List of Belgians registered with the Police Station 161 during the war. A significant proportion of those who were resident in well-heeled suburbs like Berlin-Zehlendorf were women – perhaps some of these women were employed in domestic service in middle-class homes.

camps in these districts. [19] The expense of building camps and shortage of construction materials as the war continued often meant that it was more cost effective to accommodate workers in rented premises or to allow workers to live in private accommodation.[20]

The foreign workers' home was the most common form of accommodation for foreign workers in the inner city. Most foreign workers' homes in inner-city districts were small – often housing twenty or so residents.[21] An examination of the list of Belgians who were resident in Berlin-Kreuzberg indicates that 281 Belgians were resident in the district during the war. Closer analysis of the housing of Belgians in Berlin-Kreuzberg reveals that in most cases fewer than five Belgians were registered at an individual address and there were no locations where large numbers of Belgian resided. A number of Belgians were registered as living at company premises, indicating that they most likely lived in makeshift accommodation in disused rooms or in a barracks that had been erected on factory grounds. A large concentration of Belgian workers could be found in the traditionally working-class district of Berlin-Neukölln. The residence list for the district of Berlin-Neukölln provides a means of analysing the accommodation where Belgians were housed. A total of 9,555 foreign workers were registered as living in Berlin-Neukölln by late 1942/early 1943 (see Appendix 13 on page 333).[22] The residence records for Berlin-Neukölln indicate that almost 1,000 Belgians were resident in the district during the war, including 141 women.[23]

Housing was a perennial problem in Berlin and this situation was further exacerbated by the war and bombing. David Clay Large emphasises that Berlin faced a housing crisis during the war:

> Housing had long been tight in Berlin, and it became considerably more so because of an influx of war bureaucrats and workers to man the arms factories. While the population increased by an estimated 25 percent, housing

[19] Layer-Jung, "Überwachung und Bestrafung," 85.
[20] This was especially true for smaller companies during the first half of the war because foreign workers were employed on fixed-term employment contracts and were yet to be stripped of their right to return home at the end of their employment contract. Moreover, the allocation of new workers was uncertain, particularly for small businesses.
[21] Bräutigam, "Zwangsarbeit in Berlin," 35.
[22] Pagenstecher, "Lagerlisten und Erinnerungsberichte," 104.
[23] SVG/DO, R.429/Tr.54854, List of Belgian nationals resident in Berlin-Kreuzberg and Berlin-Neukölln 1939-1945 (prepared by the International Tracing Service using the social security records, labour office records and the records of Nazi organisations from the *Verwaltungsbezirk* Berlin-Kreuzberg).

> construction remained flat. Thus the legions of newcomers found it extremely difficult to find a single room, much less an apartment, in the overcrowded metropolis.[24]

The arrival of western European workers, who were permitted to live in private accommodation, added further strain to the housing situation. On 8 September 1941 a meeting of the representatives of the Armaments Inspectorate III, the Armaments Command and the Berlin state police took place to discuss the housing of the 85,000 foreign workers living in the city. Officials noted that while workers from Poland and the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia were housed in barracks in camps, the remaining foreign workers were housed in individual barracks or in make-shift accommodation established in buildings such as guest houses and halls, as well as in private accommodation. Officials emphasised that the housing of foreigners in closed camps was a key aim and those living outside camps should be moved into camps.[25] Such policies illustrate that, while Nazi ideology deemed workers from the Netherlands, Flanders and Denmark to be racially superior Germanic peoples, many Germans in positions of authority sought to impose the policy of accommodation in camps on all foreign workers. Despite this policy of housing all foreign workers in camps, the reality changed little until the latter stages of the war.

The shortage of camp accommodation in the city meant that 120,000, or almost half of Berlin's 250,000 foreign workers, were lodged outside camps in March 1943.[26] According to a statistic published by the Berlin labour office at the end of 1942, some 23,778 beds in camps remained unoccupied, ostensibly because workers preferred private accommodation.[27] In view of the fact that many Berlin companies advertised to find private quarters for their foreign employees, during the period 1941/1942, due to a lack of places in camps this claim does not entirely ring true.[28] However, perhaps the problem of vacant camp accommodation arose because workers living in private accommodation were reluctant to move into camps – especially as the regime in camps would curtail the greater freedoms they enjoyed. The issue of foreign workers living in private accommodation would become more pressing as the Allied bombing campaign began to take a heavy toll on Berlin's

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[24] Large, *Berlin*, 331.
[25] Bräutigam, "Zwangsarbeit in Berlin," 34.
[26] Boberach, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich, vol. 13*, 4954. (Nr.367: 15.03.1943)
[27] Ibid., 4956.
[28] Layer-Jung, "Überwachung und Bestrafung," 89-90.

housing stock. Over the course of the war more than a million beds were lost as a result of bombing. Officials complained that, in areas heavily affected by bombing, some Germans were unable to find accommodation and had even been forced to accept camp accommodation.[29] In the summer and autumn of 1944 officials finally introduced a series of more restrictive measures, including directives requiring that all foreign workers living in private accommodation move into camps and seek prior authorisation before taking up accommodation, as well as greater restrictions on the movement of foreigners. A closer examination of cases where Belgian workers were housed in private accommodation, however, shows little evidence that Belgians were forced to comply with the requirement to move into camps. Much to the consternation of many Berliners, foreign workers were still living outside camps in the final months of the war. Berliners questioned, "For the sake of better surveillance, why aren't all foreigners being housed in camps? They exploit the freedoms that they are allowed much too much... Besides, they often threaten the safety of women and girls who go out alone".[30] Others suggested that the housing of all foreigners in camps would help stamp out black market trading, as well as free up rooms for Germans who had been bombed out.[31] Despite the complaints of the German population, the security services' opposition to the housing of foreign workers in private accommodation and Berlin's housing shortage, many Belgians lived in private accommodation until the end of the war. Residence lists also reveal that Belgian families with children lived in private accommodation in Berlin in some instances.

The approach adopted by German companies to resolve the problem of housing foreign employees varied significantly from one employer to another. Weserflug GmbH, for example, accommodated almost all its 3,500 foreign employees in one of two camps, which housed 1,800 and 1,700 workers respectively.[32] AEG was one of Berlin's larger employers with 9,112 employees across its ten plants.[33] Between 25 and 35 percent of the company's Berlin staff were

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[29] Boberach, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich, vol. 13*, 4956. (Nr.367: 15.03.1943)
[30] Bericht des Wehrmacht-Propaganda-Offiziers des Wehrkreiskommandos III, Berlin, Oberstleutnant Wasserfall, über den 'Sondereinsatz Berlin' (Nr.1: 10.10.–15.10.1944) (hereafter *Wehrmacht* Mood Report) quoted in Wolfram Wette, Ricarda Bremer, and Detlef Vogel, *Das letzte halbe Jahr: Stimmungsberichte der Wehrmachtpropaganda 1944/45*, 1 ed. (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2001), 129-30.
[31] *Wehrmacht* Mood Report (Nr.12: 25.12.–31.12.1944) quoted in Ibid., 198.
[32] Pagenstecher, "Lagerlisten und Erinnerungsberichte," 104.
[33] Ibid., 102.

foreign in 1942.[34] AEG established 101 smaller camps or *Ausländerheime*. The AEG Kabelwerk plant established a camp that housed 1,295 workers at Wendenschlossstrasse 304 in Berlin-Köpenick.[35] Many of its workers from western Europe lived outside camps in rented guesthouses, including married couples. The company also set up foreign workers' homes in rented premises that had been adapted to house workers (see Appendix 15 on page 334). Residents of foreign workers' homes were subject to a less strict surveillance regime and enjoyed greater freedom than their counterparts in large camps. The AEG factory police supervised accommodation run by AEG. By contrast with large camps, foreign workers' homes run by AEG-AT in rented premises generally did not have permanent supervision in place, rather the factory police carried out spot checks. For example, just after midnight on 15 May 1942 the factory police carried out a check at the ironically named *Ausländerheim "Paradiesgarten"*, Alt Treptow 4/5, Berlin-Treptow. Twelve residents of various nationalities were caught gambling – in breach of the rules at the home. Reporting the men to the police for a criminal offence under Paragraphs 284-285a of the German Criminal Code (illegal gambling), the head of the company factory police emphasised that "the men who made up the players were, for the most part, workers who do not go to work regularly and have already been arrested for refusal to work".[36] The company probably requested police intervention because the men were regarded as problem employees and a threat to discipline in the home, whereas it is likely that residents who were otherwise regarded as good employees would have escaped with a warning under such circumstances.

Conditions at foreign workers' camps varied considerably in Berlin. The undated photographs in Figures 8-10 on pages 189-90, taken by Belgian camp residents, illustrate the crudely built timber barracks that were the most common type of accommodation provided for workers. Timber barracks provided little protection from the elements during Berlin's bitterly cold winters. Camps were often located on or adjacent to factory grounds and therefore placed workers at greater risk of falling victim to bombing. Belgian conscript Willem L recalled, "Everything was

[34] Thomas Irmer, "»... Eine Art Sklavenhandel« Konturen der Zwangsarbeit beim Elektrokonzern AEG/Telefunken in Berlin-Wedding," in *Zwangsarbeit in Berlin*, 158.
[35] Pagenstecher, "Lagerlisten und Erinnerungsberichte," 104.
[36] LAB, A Rep. 227 – 2: Nr.2. Letter to Criminal Police dated 15.05.1942.

constructed of timber that was of poor quality and unpainted".[37] It was difficult to keep cheaply constructed timber barracks clean – exacerbating the problem of lice. By contrast a French worker who arrived in spring 1943, fearing he would be interned in one of Nazi Germany's infamous concentration camps, was pleasantly surprised:

> We were welcomed by very polite civilians, and calmly stepped off the train... We were taken to whitewashed buildings that had obviously not been occupied. Nothing but cleanliness; everything tip-top! The sanitary facilities were brand new, and there were showers with warm water.[38]

These two accounts clearly illustrate that accommodation standards varied significantly even across camps that housed western Europeans. Nonetheless, conditions in camps that housed western Europeans were quite favourable when compared with the conditions in which many of their Russian counterparts lived.

Figure 8: The Berlin camp where Young Christian Workers' leader Jef Vyncke lived with fellow Belgians

Source: CEGES/SOMA, image database, Nr.4962.

[37] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/50, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Willem L [extended account written in 1975].
[38] Marcel Elola quoted in Roger Moorhouse, *Berlin at War: Life and Death in the Capital 1939-45* (London: The Bodley Head, 2010), 123.

Figure 9: Belgian workers cleaning in order to rid their barracks of lice after their arrival at a camp in Berlin-Staaken

Source: CEGES/SOMA, image database, Nr.5064.

Figure 10: Photograph of the Berlin-Haselhorst camp

Source: CEGES/SOMA, image database, Nr.5085.

4. Health

Access to health services was a problem for all inhabitants in Berlin during the war. Medical care for Germany's civilian population suffered from the first years of the war as a result of anti-Jewish measures that banned Jewish doctors from practising

medicine, measures that made it more difficult for women to enter universities and the call-up of doctors and pharmacists to the military. *Wehrmacht* mood reports point to the difficulties that Germans faced in simply accessing a doctor and obtaining medicines. In November 1944 it was reported that many Germans complained that in the event of illness they could barely get access to a doctor or dentist if they were not already patients at the surgery. It was suggested that regular patients were allowed to enter via the back door, while others in the waiting room could get grey hair while waiting.[39] There is much to suggest that foreigners, who were much lower down the pecking order, found it even more difficult to access health services. While western Europeans received comparatively good standards of medical care, compared with Poles and *Ostarbeiter*, many Belgians nevertheless experienced great difficulties in getting medical attention in Germany. Moreover, standards of care deteriorated markedly towards the end of the war. The records of Belgians who died in Berlin illustrate that health had a major impact on the survival prospects of Belgians who went to Germany. Some Belgians suffered permanent or long-lasting effects on their health and a number of Belgians perished in Germany.

For most foreign workers access to a doctor was very limited. In preparation for the mass deployment of *Ostarbeiter* in Berlin, Dr Adomat, the director of the Berlin City Health Department, wrote to the local health departments in the city in November 1942, requesting that they register all camps in their local authority with the central health authorities. Officials gathered information regarding the provision of health services to foreign camp residents. Summing up the information provided by local health departments, one of Adomat's colleagues in department II 6 reported in April 1943 that the overwhelming majority of doctors who were attached to camps worked in private practice and saw foreign workers in addition to their other patients, with few hospital doctors providing medical care in foreign workers' camps. Company doctors who were solely dedicated to the care of camp residents or company employees were generally only available in large camps or companies. In 145 camps foreign workers had no access to a doctor. A small number of foreign workers – mostly western European – were permitted to choose their doctor freely.[40]

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[39] *Wehrmacht* Mood Report (Nr.5: 7.11.–12.11.1944) quoted in Wette, Bremer, and Vogel, *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 151.

[40] Pagenstecher, "Lagerlisten und Erinnerungsberichte," 95.

In many cases officials reported that camp residents had access to a doctor; however, their access to doctors was very limited in reality. One practising doctor in Berlin-Mariendorf, for example, was responsible for providing medical care to a total of 4,829 foreign workers employed by Askania, Siemens, Fritz Werner and the Deutsche Reichsbahn.[41] Jan A recalled that he went to see the camp doctor, but was turned away because he was required to see the Flemish workplace representative before he could be admitted to see the doctor. With many patients under their charge, camp doctors had very limited time and access to doctors was therefore often restricted to reduce unnecessary visits and prioritise more serious cases. Pressed for time with a long line of patients, it is unlikely that doctors were particularly thorough in their examinations. The Flemish workplace representative at Jan A's camp could also issue a certificate exempting an employee from work on medical grounds. Thus workers did not always receive medical attention even when they missed work due to illness or injury. Like many workers employed in heavy industry, Jan A sustained a cut that was 3cm long and 1.5cm deep in the workplace. Jan A was initially given ten days leave; however, the wound did not heal and he recorded in his diary two months after he first sustained the injury that the wound had begun to ulcerate. He missed further workdays as a consequence.[42] The lack of easily accessible medical services in Berlin also meant that relatively minor complaints developed into more serious health conditions in some instances. The failure to access medical attention could have dire consequences for foreign workers, as even relatively minor ailments could ultimately lead to death if left untreated. Walloon Guillaume T died on 2 November 1944 as a result of an infection and thrombosis. Around three months prior to his death he had been swimming and water had penetrated his ear. He experienced some pain in his ear for a few days and then his condition improved. Several weeks later Guillaume T again began to suffer pain in his ear and severe headaches. He was admitted to the Berlin's Charité hospital on 28 August 1944. Doctors found that he was suffering from a chronic infection and had a phlegmon and thrombosis in his left sinus. Medical staff operated on his sinus, but he died three days after the operation.[43] Foreign workers who were debilitated through physical exhaustion and malnutrition often struggled to fight infection, especially in the winter months, and

[41] Ibid.
[42] CEGES/SOMA, AA1260/60, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jan A's diary, entry dated 03.06.1943.
[43] SVG/DO, R.149/Tr.13.221, Translation of Guillaume T's medical record.

thus even relatively minor injuries such as cuts could lead to death if chronic infection took hold. This applied equally to influenza and other respiratory infections, which often developed into life-threatening pneumonia.

Doctors employed by companies were accountable to their employer and this probably had some bearing on their treatment of foreign workers. Manfred Stürzbecher emphasises, "The health of individual forced workers did not stand at the heart of medical activity by any means, rather the defence of the 'Aryan' German population and the preservation of the labour of forced workers".[44] This point is confirmed by the experience of Jan A. After suffering a workplace injury, Jan A initially continued working; however, after his boot filled up with blood from the cut he went to the factory doctor to get his leg bandaged. He recalled the uncaring approach adopted by the doctor, "He tended [the wound] and growled afterwards, 'You are going back to work', which I didn't do because when I went back to my department the foreman immediately wrote a note saying that I could go back to the barracks".[45] The doctor's primary consideration seemed to be the employee's return to work, and his approach was almost certainly shaped to some degree by the belief that foreign workers feigned illness or exaggerated the severity of their illness/injury to avoid work. Technical draughtsman Willem L recalled that he often reported to the doctor to avoid work. The long queue meant that by the time he saw the doctor much of the morning had passed. Gaining a reputation as a shirker who feigned illness could, however, have serious consequences in the event that one became genuinely ill. On 6 December 1943 Willem L felt ill and went to the camp doctor. However, the doctor sent him back to work. He suggested: "The doctors in the camps were really bad doctors who provided only a single diagnosis: 'work, work'". Willem L continued to attend work for another week, performing little work and spending much of his day resting his head on his desk or in the bathroom. He returned to the doctor again only to be told once again that he was fit and should return to work. Suffering from a high fever, Willem L was finally admitted to the camp infirmary on 18 December 1943. At the time he was already subsisting on reduced rations as a punishment from his employer. According to Willem L's

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[44] Andreas Frewer and Günther Siedbürger, "Zwangsarbeit und Medizin im NS-Staat zur Einführung," in *Medizin und Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus: Einsatz und Behandlung von "Ausländern" im Gesundheitswesen* ed. Andreas Frewer and Günther Siedbürger (Frankfurt a.M.; New York: Campus, 2004), 13.

[45] CEGES/SOMA, AA1260/60, Jan A's diary, entry dated 31.03.1943.

account, he was told after his transfer to the infirmary that: "He who does not work does not receive food". Willem L was denied sickness benefits so that the only means through which he could obtain food to supplement his meagre rations was exchanging tobacco for food. He was "left helpless to starve and die". After spending fourteen days in the infirmary, Willem L had to walk three kilometres through the snow to visit another doctor. Suffering from a high fever, he faced the same trek back to the barracks. A week later he had to undertake the same trip to see the doctor again. During this period Willem L "became sicker and sicker, thinner and thinner". Finally in January 1944 Willem L was sent to the Potsdam City Hospital for a medical examination. At the time of his medical examination at the hospital Willem L weighed just 50kg.[46] His case provides clear illustration of the consequences of a doctor not believing that a sick worker was ill.

The medical care afforded to foreigners in Berlin hospitals varied considerably. The medical records of foreign civilians treated at hospitals across Berlin indicate that western European patients generally received attentive care, in line with the normal standards of care in these institutions.[47] However, the conditions at the foreigners' hospital run by the city administration in Berlin-Mahlow were, by contrast, catastrophic. According to a report written by the Main Health Office in Berlin to the Head of the Regional Government in Potsdam in December 1942, foreign workers, vagabonds and other "asocials" from the capital and the Teltow district suffering from serious illness or infectious disease should be sent to the Foreigners' hospital in Berlin-Mahlow in order to ensure that they did not cause annoyance or disquiet amongst the civilian population.[48] From August 1942 around 1,500 *Ostarbeiter*, including 400 women and eighty children, died at Foreigners' hospital – 60 percent from tuberculosis.[49] In view of Nazi racial policy with respect to *Ostarbeiter*, it comes as little surprise that they represent the majority of those who perished at this institution. *Ostarbeiter* who were seriously ill and unlikely to make a fast recovery were considered expendable. Stürzbecher's study of patient records from the institution shows that patients from Poland, France, Holland, Belgium and

[46] Ibid., AA1216/50, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Willem L.
[47] Manfred Stürzbecher, "Krankengeschichten von Ausländern: Ein Bestand im Landesarchiv Berlin," in *Zwangsarbeit in Berlin*, 97.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Pagenstecher, "Lagerlisten und Erinnerungsberichte," 91.

the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia are notably absent amongst the patients admitted to the institution.[50] This revelation is not surprising.

By contrast with *Ostarbeiter* who were transferred to the Foreigners' hospital, Belgian patients who were seriously ill were treated in hospitals across Berlin and those who were not expected to make a fast recovery were generally sent home where this was practicable. Of those 158 Belgians who were reported to have died from medical illness in Berlin during the war, ninety-three died in hospital, confirming that Belgians suffering from life-threatening illnesses were generally hospitalised.[51] While the Foreigners' hospital was used as a quarantine station for *Ostarbeiter* suffering from contagious diseases, western Europeans suffering from highly contagious diseases were transferred to a department at the am Urban hospital in Graefestraße Berlin-Neukölln and from November 1944 to the Prenzlauer Berg hospital and the Hufeland hospital.[52] Interestingly, despite concerns about public health and provision for the transfer of foreigners suffering from infectious diseases to quarantine stations, Belgians suffering from infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and diphtheria were not transferred to quarantine stations routinely. Confirming the privileged treatment Belgians enjoyed, Belgians suffering from tuberculosis were treated alongside German civilians.

On the basis of the medical files of patients treated at the Foreigners' hospital in Berlin-Mahlow, Stürzbecher contends that the medical files of foreign patients treated at the institution are no different in principle to those of German patients – implying that foreign patients received a similar level of care. Moreover, argues Stürzbecher, early discharge from hospital does not seem to have occurred in most cases.[53] This point is borne out by the experiences of a young Belgian woman, Anna B, who gave birth to a child at the university gynaecological hospital in Berlin-Buch in January 1945. A statement given by hospital staff to the police after Anna B abandoned her newborn revealed that the Belgian had been accommodated in the same ward as German mothers and a German woman had assisted with translation because Anna B spoke little German. In a further act of kindness, the German

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[50] Stürzbecher, "Krankengeschichten von Ausländern," 98. Just two files from the group of 200 patient files held at the Berlin State Archive pertain to Belgians. LAB, A Rep. 242: Nr.96-101.
[51] This figure is based on the author's own statistics based on research into the records of Belgians' deaths.
[52] Pagenstecher, "Lagerlisten und Erinnerungsberichte," 93.
[53] Stürzbecher, "Krankengeschichten von Ausländern," 102.

woman gave the young Belgian a nappy for her child.[54] This case illustrates that some Germans treated foreign patients with genuine compassion – regarding them as fellow human beings.[55] Belgians, especially Flemings, enjoyed a privileged status as western Europeans and were afforded a standard of postnatal care comparable to that provided to German mothers. The offspring of Flemish women were considered racially valuable and these women could therefore expect a good level of antenatal and postnatal care. Their experiences, of course, starkly contrast with the level of care afforded to *Ostarbeiter* women. The medical records of Belgian women who gave birth in German hospitals indicate, for example, that they spent several days in hospital after childbirth, while *Ostarbeiter* women often gave birth in camps without medical care. However, the presence of foreigners, especially *Ostarbeiter*, in German hospitals was considered as an affront to the more racially and ideologically minded. Security Service reports indicate that some Germans objected to being accommodated alongside foreign patients. In December 1944 *Wehrmacht* propaganda officers who garnered public opinion reported that German women in a maternity ward questioned why foreign women were admitted to hospital and German women were forced to return home just five days after the birth of their child.[56]

Belgians generally received a high level of care; however, the case of Flemish volunteer Jules H also provides clear signs that some Belgians experienced communication barriers that hampered their treatment in German hospitals.[57] Jules H who was admitted to the Wittenauer *Heilstätten* psychiatric institution in Berlin-Wittenau on 24 January 1944 (see Appendix 16 on page 339).[58] His admission record indicates that he was transferred to the institution because he was suspected of suffering from an organic psychosis necessitating his confinement in a closed institution. However, the medical diagnosis upon admission indicates that Jules H was suffering from epilepsy and tuberculosis. Institution staff noted that it was barely possible to understand him because he spoke very poor German and they repeatedly

[54] LAB, A Pr.Br.Rep. 030-02-04: Nr.3.
[55] Boberach, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich,* vol. 11, 4026-7. (Nr.304: 30.07.1942).
[56] *Wehrmacht* Mood Report (Nr.9: 4.12.–10.12.1944 quoted in Wette, Bremer, and Vogel, *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 179.
[57] Stürzbecher has observed that the medical notes were incomplete in a number of cases, probably the result of communication problems between staff and foreign patients. Stürzbecher, "Krankengeschichten von Ausländern," 101.
[58] SVG/DO, SDR 176091 and D ad 4074/374892.

referred to him as a Frenchman. It is apparent that Jules H struggled to communicate with staff even on a basic level. The final record in Jules H's file indicates that he died from tuberculosis and the accompanying mental disturbance on 27 June 1944. The distress and misery he must have experienced during his hospitalisation is quite extreme.

5. Mortality

Germany experienced an enormous loss of life throughout the war, although the worst of the killing took place from January to May 1945 due to bombing and fighting on German soil. During this time there was an average of 1,000 deaths each day due to bombing.[59] Richard Bessel observes that "Bombing, murder, terror, suicide, intense battles, mass flight, and deportation created a landscape of death in Germany in 1945".[60] Burial records from Berlin indicate that approximately 12,500 foreign workers died in Berlin over the course of the war – the majority of whom were *Ostarbeiter*.[61] Life in Germany became more chaotic towards the end of the war and municipal authorities across Berlin struggled to deal with the rising death toll in the final months of the war and record-keeping was far less consistent. Reports regarding mass burials and the destruction of records appeared in the Berlin press after the war. In October 1945 the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) newspaper *Neue Zeit* published an article in which it accused the Nazis of mishandling the bodies of foreign civilians who died in the last bombing raids in Berlin, burying them in unmarked mass graves and thereby inflicting the final indignity of erasing their individual identity. Thus figures on foreigners who died in Berlin during the war are probably not accurate and the real figure may be much higher.

There are two key sources of information regarding Belgian civilian deaths in Germany: the wartime records of the Military Administration, specifically telegrams sent by German labour offices to Group VII notifying officials of Belgian civilian deaths; and the lists compiled by BLOs in Germany after the end of the war. The

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[59] Richard Bessel, "The Shadow of Death in Germany at the end of the Second World War," in Alon Confino, Paul Betts, and Dirk Schumann (eds), *Between mass death and individual loss: the place of the dead in twentieth century Germany. Studies in German history* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 52.

[60] Ibid., 55.

[61] Bräutigam, "Zwangsarbeit in Berlin," 44. This figure is based on the cemetery records and many foreigners' deaths are probably omitted because the deceased was buried outside Berlin or their death was not recorded. This figure also does not include concentration camp prisoners and Jews who were killed in extermination camps.

Group VII telegrams from 1943 and 1944 have survived and form part of the Marburg Collection; however, the records from the final months of the occupation are incomplete.[62] On the other hand, lists compiled by BLOs cover the entire war and the immediate postwar period. Using the records of Group VII and the reports of the BLOs, I have identified a total of 830 Belgians who died in Berlin between August 1940 and in the months that followed the end of the war. All deaths recorded in 1945 have been included in the sample as many of those who died in the aftermath of the war were often civilian workers who had not returned home due to illness. The cause of death is unknown in a total of 409 of these 830 deaths. It is notable that the number of deaths for which no cause of death is recorded rose significantly in 1944/1945.

Table 7 on page 199 provides a statistical breakdown of the cause of death for Belgians who died in Berlin. Frans Selleslagh suggests that 70 percent of Belgians who perished in Germany between August 1940 and June 1944 were killed in bombing raids. The analysis of Belgian deaths in Berlin reveals a different picture: 28 percent of the Belgians who died in Berlin during the war were killed by bombing. This is a much smaller proportion than suggested by Selleslagh. Given that Berlin was heavily affected by Allied bombing, this finding raises questions about the conclusion that the majority of Belgians who died in Germany were killed by bombing. A total of fifty-six Belgians died at the Grossbeeren AEL, although the precise cause of death is unknown in all but one of these cases.[63] Mortality rates at Berlin's three AELs, Grossbeeren, Wuhlheide and Fehrbellin, were high. Some 25,000 people passed though the AEL Wuhlheide. According to Christine Steer's estimate 3,000 people perished at the camp as a result of murder, maltreatment, hard labour and illness. Another key cause of death in Berlin was execution. A total of ninety-nine Belgians were executed in Berlin during the war. These statistics are, however, somewhat deceptive because most executed Belgians were resistance fighters who had been arrested by the Military Administration in Belgium and were sent to Germany for trial. An increasing number of civilians from occupied western Europe were taken to penal institutions in Germany after their arrest. Comparatively

[62] SVG/DO, R.184/Tr.39157, Marburg Collection, 1141-8, 6081-5915 – 6082 (Film 21).
[63] ITS/ARCH/Arbeitserziehunglager Ordner 1, S.34-7. List of prisoner deaths at the AEL Grossbeeren provided to the Netherlands Red Cross by the Dutch national Jan P who had been imprisoned at the camp and had worked as a nurse at the infirmary.

few of those Belgians executed in Berlin had been working in Germany at the time of their arrest.

Table 7: Deaths by category

	1940	*1941*	*1942*	*1943*	*1944*	*1945*	*Total*
Accident	0	0	0	4	3	0	7
Bombing	0	0	0	28	65	21	114
Burns	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Deaths in custody	0	0	1	8*	38	11	58
Drowning	0	0	0	5	4	0	9
Executed	1	1	8	47	37	5	99
Gas poisoning	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Illness	2	9	12	65	41	26	155
Malnutrition/starvation	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Murder	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Poisoning	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Suicide	0	0	0	2	0	2	4
Workplace accident	0	0	0	6	2	0	8
Unknown	6	3	24	46	83	106	268
Total	9	13	45	206	275	175	731
Date of death unknown	100						
Total deaths	830						

*One individual counted both under medical illness and deaths in custody

Source: Statistics compiled by the author using records from the SVG/DO: R.184/Tr.39.157 and BUR Berlin (*Acts de décès*).

The cause of death was "unknown" in a large number of cases. Bombing could have been the cause of death in many of these deaths. According to the findings, the medical illness claimed the lives of many Belgians in Berlin was medical illness, with a total of 155 Belgians' deaths attributed to medical illness. This figure represents 38 percent of the total Belgian deaths in Berlin where the cause of death is recorded. Table 8 on page 200 provides a breakdown of the cause of death of Belgians who died due to medical illness. These deaths have been broken down further to examine the factors underlying civilian deaths more closely. The key causes of death amongst Belgians in Berlin were infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, diphtheria, as well as respiratory infections such as influenza and pneumonia. A number of Belgians also died from sepsis. Just three Belgians are

reported to have died as a direct result of malnutrition – all in the final months of the war. Nevertheless, many Belgians' deaths can be indirectly linked to undernourishment and therefore lower resistance to disease.

Table 8: Recorded cause of death for Belgians who died of medical illness in Berlin

Illness	*Number of deaths*
Infectious diseases	
Diphtheria	7*
Dysentery	3*
Influenza	1*
Meningitis	5
Scarlet fever	2*
Tuberculosis	36*
Typhus	2
Other medical illnesses	
Alcohol poisoning	1*
Angina pectoris	1
Appendicitis	1
Bleeding on the brain	2
Cancer	3
Cirrhosis	1
Diabetes	1
Embolism	3*
Epilepsy	1
Exopthalmic goitre	2
Gastritis	1*
General weakness	1
Oedema	3*
Heart attack	6
Infection of the peritoneum	3
Internal haemorrhage	1
Kidney infection	1
Lung infection	8*
Miscarriage	1*
Myocardial paralysis	1*
Peritonitis (middle ear infection)	3
Pleurisy	10
Pneumonia	6*
Sepsis	5
Stomach ulcer	1
Thrombosis	1
Weakness of the heart	15*
Weakness of the circulatory system	2*

*Individual counted under two categories

Source: Statistics compiled by the author using records from the SVG/DO: R.184/Tr.39.157 and BUR Berlin (*Acts de décès*).

6. Bombing

Berlin was targeted by Allied military leaders due to its symbolic importance as the capital of the Nazi state and was subject to 363 bombing raids altogether. In November 1943 Arthur "Bomber" Harris, Chief of Britain's Bomber Command and mastermind of the RAF bombing campaign, promised the British public that the RAF would "bombard [Berlin] until the heart of Nazi Germany has stopped beating".[64] From 1943 onwards daily life in Berlin was punctuated by frequent air-raid alarms, which disrupted people's days and nights. Belgians who came to Berlin early in the war witnessed how the city was reduced to ash and dust as one district after another was bombed. Around 600,000 civilians perished as a result of the Allied bombing campaign;[65] in Berlin the death toll totalled 49,000.[66] Between 1943 and 1945, 114 Belgians were killed by bombing in Berlin. Most Belgian bombing victims died in 1943/1944 (see Figure 11 on page 203).[67] The number of Belgians killed as a result of bombing may be higher, as the number of cases where the cause of death was not recorded rose significantly in 1944/1945.

The exigencies of war rendered the traditional distinction between combatants and non-combatants meaningless. Everybody living in an "industrial town" like Berlin was considered to be contributing directly or indirectly to the German war effort, and had therefore become a supposedly legitimate target. Harris justified the targeting of German cities and civilians on the basis that "[workers] are literally the heart of Germany's war potential".[68] Goebbels, *Gauleiter* of Berlin and de facto leader in the capital, ordered the evacuation of children, non-working women and the elderly to the Mark Brandenburg, East Prussia and the Wartheland. Many Berliners were reluctant to leave the city. However, in the wake of the bombing of Hamburg in late July 1943, which resulted in a firestorm that killed 34,000 people, wounded 125,000 and left the city largely in ruins,[69] well over a

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[64] Quoted in Mike Davis, "Angriff auf 'German Village'," in *Als Feuer vom Himmel fiel*, ed. Stephan Burgdorff and Christian Habbe (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2003), 88.
[65] Jochen Bölsche, "'So muss die Hölle aussehen'," in ibid., 19.
[66] Ibid., 20.
[67] The total bomb load the Allies dropped on Germany steadily increased: in 1943 was four times that of 1942 and in 1944 five times that of 1943. Jeremy Noakes, "Germany," in *The Civilian in war: the home front in Europe, Japan and the USA in World War II*, ed. Jeremy Noakes (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1992), 53.
[68] Quoted in Ulrich Schwarz, "'Überall Leichen, überall Tod'," in *Als Feuer vom Himmel fiel*, 70.
[69] Ursula Büttner, "'Gomorrha' und die Folgen der Bombenkrieg," in *Hamburg im "Dritten Reich"*, ed. Josef Schmid and Forschungsstelle für Zeitgeschichte in Hamburg (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005), 618.

million Berliners evacuated the city.[70] The number of registered inhabitants dropped from 3.7 million in July 1943 to 2.8 million by January 1945, although some evacuated Berliners would soon return from the countryside.[71] Evacuation was not an option available to German and foreign workers who were forced to stay in Berlin until the end of the war.

In late 1943 the RAF turned its attention to Germany's capital launching the Battle of Berlin. Berlin was subjected to an intensive bombing campaign, including sixteen major raids, between November 1943 and March 1944.[72] Belgian worker Alfons L recalled the opening raids:

> The bombardments increased in intensity. Over the course of a week the RAF bombarded Berlin with approximately 800 planes. It was the heaviest offensive we had experienced. Everywhere it thundered from the anti-aircraft guns. Screeching bombs exploded and the untameable seats of fire caught hold because the RAF dropped phosphorus bombs.[73]

Alfons L's account highlights the intensity of the bombing. The raid on the night of 22/23 November 1943 had a devastating effect, causing 2,000 deaths and leaving 175,000 homeless – half of those killed during the Battle of Berlin.[74] Appendix 17 on page 341 provides a summary of the bombing raids in Berlin and details of deaths and the number of Berliners rendered homeless during some of the heaviest bombing raids. Estimates of the effect of the Battle of Berlin in terms of deaths, injuries and damage to housing vary: Laurenz Demps has calculated that a total of 7,480 were killed (with an additional 2,194 missing), 17,092 were injured and 817,730 were rendered homeless;[75] by contrast Reinhard Rürup's more conservative estimate places the death toll at 4,000, with a further 10,000 injured and 450,000 left homeless as a result of the Battle of Berlin.[76] Mike Davis has suggested that up to 1.5 million Berliners were left homeless.[77] The bombing raids had a devastating effect on Berlin's inhabitants – German and foreign alike. Aside from those who were killed

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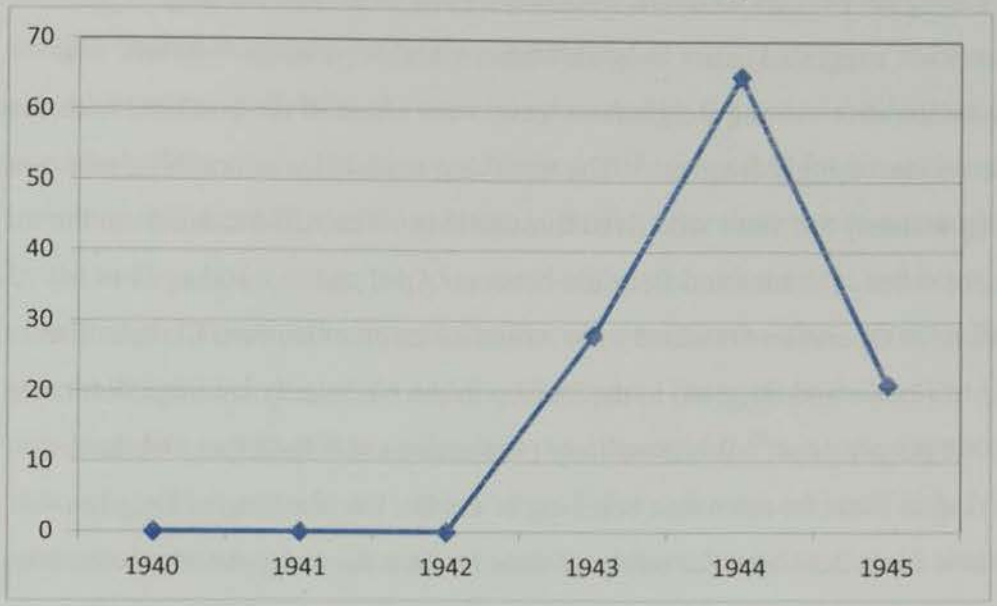
[70] Anthony Read and David Fisher, *Berlin: the biography of a city* (London: Pimlico, 1994), 237.
[71] Large, *Berlin*, 347. While Goebbels hoped to rid the city of "superfluous eaters", to the frustration of Nazi officials many evacuees returned to Berlin.
[72] While the Allies focussed on the bombing of Berlin during this period, other German cities were also bombed to prevent the concentration of defences in Berlin.
[73] CEGES/SOMA, AB2179, Alfons L, "Bommen op Berlin", 22.
[74] AC Grayling, *Among the dead cities: was the Allied bombing of civilians in WWII a necessity or a crime?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 309-10.
[75] Laurenz Demps, "Die Luftangriffe auf Berlin: Ein dokumentarischer Bericht. Teil II," *Jahrbuch des Märkischen Museums* 8 (1982): 23.
[76] Reinhard Rürup, ed., *Berlin 1945: eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: Verlag Willmuth Arenhövel, 1995), 11.
[77] Davis, "Angriff auf 'German Village'," 88.

or left permanently maimed, it is clear that the raids left hundreds of thousands of people destitute and homeless, often with little more than the clothes on their backs.

Figure 11: Number of Belgian deaths due to bombing in Berlin



Source: Author's statistics based on research into SVG. R.184/Tr.39.157 and BUR Berlin: Actes des décès.

Belgians living in Germany suffered as a result of bombing, just like their German counterparts. Many Belgians nevertheless later recalled that they rejoiced at bombing raids – both because of the suffering the raids inflicted upon the German people and, more importantly, because they hoped bombing would soon bring an end to the war. Foreign workers also felt impotent in the face of the Allied bombing campaign. Jacques K later recalled the bombing of his barracks. All his belongings, with the exception of his work uniform, were destroyed. He was, however, amongst the more fortunate: the Russians in the neighbouring barracks were burned alive. A few weeks later he received a package from his parents with new clothes. In August 1943 his camp in Mariendorf was hit again and was completely destroyed. Jacques K described the instability workers experienced, "At that time we came to know the true life of a nomad: first to Weissensee in the south of Berlin, then returning to Mariendorf to different barracks next to the factory, and finally lodging in the factory canteen".[78] At the end of 1943 there were air raids every night.[79]

Belgians, like other residents of German cities, were menaced by the spectre of bombing. Flemish worker Felix G recalled how the bombing and innumerable

[78] CEGES/SOMA, AA1260/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jacques K.
[79] Ibid.

fires that accompanied the bombing left them fearing that they would never return home.[80] Willem B observed: "Because of the threat to life, [I] always hoped for a speedy end to the war".[81] The fear of bombing emerged as a major reason for the failure of Belgian workers to return from leave from 1943. The Military Administration suggested many Belgian workers, and in particular women, who failed to return after visiting Belgium on leave were afraid of the bombing raids that had become increasingly frequent.[82] The terrifying experience of bombing raids was an abiding memory for those who lived through them. The Allies carried out the bombing of cities in France and Belgium between April and November 1944 in preparation for Operation Overlord – the Allied invasion of western Europe. The bombing of France and Belgium in the lead up to the Normandy landings, left more than 15,000 people dead.[83] While military preparations for Operation Overlord brought respite from the relentless bombing of Berlin, the bombing of Belgium brought new anxieties about the safety of their families for Belgians who were away from home. Belgium's liberation in September 1944 meant that Belgians still living in Germany were cut off from their families and experienced months of uncertainty about the fate of their loved ones.

Belgians working in Germany relied upon the foreign newspapers for news regarding the progress of the war and the situation back home. Anxious about the fate of his homeland, Jan A braved the early snowfall on 16 November 1944 to buy copies of the foreign language newspapers *Het Volk* (Dutch) and *Vlaamsche Post* (Flemish). An article titled "Vlaanderen Vrij" ("Flanders Free") reported on the "hunger and cold in Belgium". He noted that the newspapers reported that there was fighting south east of Helmond in the Netherlands and in Lorraine. This point is interesting as it shows that Belgians working in Germany had relatively up-to-date information regarding the progress of the war, even if the newspapers did not necessarily provide an accurate picture of the course of the war. Many ordinary Germans resented the fact that the German newspapers did not provide an accurate picture of the course of the war. Quite surprisingly foreign newspapers continued to be produced until the end of the war, in spite of the rationing of paper and criticism

[80] Ibid., AA1260/13, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Felix G.
[81] Ibid., *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Willem B.
[82] Ibid., BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, Nr.24, Anlage D, 16.
[83] Christoph Kucklick, *Feuersturm: Der Bombenkrieg gegen Deutschland* (Hamburg: GEO Ellert & Richter Verlag, 2003), 132.

from Germans who "complained about the surplus of foreign newspapers, which are always available in large quantities, [while] there are never enough German [newspapers]".[84] The continued availability of foreign newspapers provided foreign workers with an invaluable source of information regarding the progress of the war and the liberation of their respective homelands.

Foreign workers' fears were compounded by the poor air-raid protection that was available to them. The Nazis publicised extensive plans for air-raid protection, including 2,000 public air-raid shelters in Berlin, after their rise to power; however, by the outbreak of the war just 15 percent of the planned shelters had been constructed. Large public air-raid shelters were built at the Zoo, Anhalter Bahnhof, Humboldthain, Friedrichshain and the Kleistpark. These large shelters could accommodate just 65,000 people, while the masses of the population were forced to seek refuge in makeshift shelters in cellars.[85] Foreign workers justifiably felt particularly vulnerable because they could be denied access to air-raid shelters. Henri C recalled how German civilians sometimes refused to allow them entry to air-raid shelters, while at other times permitted them to enter.[86] In other instances only basic air-raid protection was available. Lucien B who worked for Rheinmetall Borsig and lived in Berlin-Henningsdorf recalled:

> As soon as a raid was announced the guards drove us from the barracks into the shelters. But the shelters were so rudimentary that we still preferred to slip away to our barracks to a good night's sleep. One night there was a veritable raid of phosphorous incendiary bombs. On the ground it sufficed to cover them with sand (and it did not miss here by much). But in one barracks it was more serious: not far from us some Czechs were killed through an incendiary.[87]

Belgians often felt that there was very little point in taking shelter during air raids. Moreover, many foreign workers felt so exhausted by the almost daily air-raid alarms and long working hours that they elected to stay in their beds rather than face another sleepless night in an air-raid shelter. Foreign workers were therefore left with the dilemma of whether to seek shelter or not to bother lest they were denied entry. Foreign workers were therefore often exposed to bombing raids to a greater degree than the German population. With the RAF and US Air Force bombing Berlin by day

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[84] *Wehrmacht* Mood Report (Nr.9: 4.12.–10.12.1944) in Wette, Bremer, and Vogel, *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 178-9.
[85] Rürup, ed., *Berlin 1945*, 11.
[86] CEGES/SOMA, AA1260/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Henri C.
[87] Ibid., AB1202, Lucien B, "Témoignage 1943-1945", 2-3.

and night from 1944, production in the city's factories was hampered significantly. The International Red Cross complained to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin that in the summer of 1944 the Armaments Ministry had issued a decree giving plant managers more discretion: "Managers in individual factories can determine whether work will be halted or should continue during an air-raid. As a result, POWs and civilian workers in the armaments industry often have to remain at their workplaces even when attacking planes are flying overhead".[88] Foreign workers therefore felt especially vulnerable because employers could force them to work through alarms in order to limit disruption and were disproportionately represented amongst the victims of bombing.[89]

A Security Service report dated 30 May 1943 discussed the behaviour of foreign workers and POWs in response to bombing raids. The authors emphasised that it was difficult to offer an overall judgement on the response of foreigners because their responses "ranged from cheerful and impeccable cooperation to indifference and attitudes that were to some degree openly oppositional".[90] While some reports praised foreign workers for their assistance in clean-up efforts in the wake of bombing raids, others accused foreigners of openly expressing *Schadenfreude* (malicious pleasure) in the destruction. Reports from Koblenz and Bremen even accused foreign workers of using desk lamps to signal to bombers during air-raid alerts.[91] The claim that foreign workers intentionally used lamps to signal to Allied bombers must, however, be treated with great scepticism because they were also likely to be killed or injured as a result of such actions. By contrast with reports accusing foreign workers of *Schadenfreude*, another report praised the behaviour of Flemings:

> The Flemings generally display an attitude that is correct and are positively disposed towards the Germans, as well as [showing] a willingness to help. In Hamburg voluntary registration for fire-fighting can be observed in many cases. Their willingness to assist has increased considerably as a result of the attack on Antwerp.[92]

It is difficult to assess the effect of Allied bombing of Antwerp and Ghent on the attitudes of Belgians working in Germany. However, notably absent from the

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[88] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 318.
[89] Ibid., 317.
[90] Boberach, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, vol. 13, 5295. (Nr.386: 30.05.1943).
[91] Ibid., 5295-301.
[92] Ibid.

postwar accounts of Belgians who lived through the bombing of Germany is any sentiment of anger. Alfons L recalled, "Lying in the courtyard of our camp was the motor of an English Bristol Blenheim bomber that had taken a direct hit from the flak and had broken up. The crew members had also fallen to their deaths from a great height".[93] Even when confronted with the sight of the RAF bomber plane and its dead crew, Alfons L does not express any sentiment of anger towards the airmen. On the contrary, his account evokes the sadness he felt as he looked on as SS officials came to collect the bodies. Turning to the issue of the willingness of Belgian workers to assist with fire-fighting and clean-up work, this willingness to help after bombing raids is probably also symptomatic of the pragmatic approach adopted by foreigners in response to the destruction caused by bombing and a tacit acknowledgement that their own fate was entwined with that of the German population. Delays in carrying out clean-up work simply made life harder for everyone.

The willingness of industrial workers to attend work even after heavy bombing raids meant absence levels were seldom greater than 15 percent.[94] The German authorities continually praised the discipline of the German workers, and also begrudgingly admitted that this also applied to some foreign workers toiling in German factories. There were, however, good reasons for workers to attend work even after their accommodation had been bombed. One such reason was the distribution of additional rations by employers. In view of the increasing chaos and disorientation, attending work each day provided workers with stability. Hans Mommsen has argued that the bombing of Germany had the opposite effect to that which was intended, "A spirit of struggling on developed [amongst the German people] as a result of the bombs, and Nazi organisations were able to portray themselves as helpers in times of emergency and were able to bind the people to the regime".[95] Foreigners, like Germans, were dependent on the German authorities and their employers for housing and basic necessities such as food in the wake of bombing raids. Thus in this respect foreign workers were also tied to their employers and the Nazi authorities in order to survive.

Figure 12: Distribution of soup to Walloons at an AEG factory in Berlin

[93] CEGES/SOMA, AB2179, Alfons L, "Bommen op Berlin", 22.
[94] Hans Mommsen, "Wie die Bomber Hitler halfen," in *Als Feuer vom Himmel fiel*, 118.
[95] Ibid.

CEGES/SOMA: image database, Nr.4992.

7. Relations with the German civilian population

Belgians' experiences in their dealings with Germans varied significantly, and often evolved over the course of the war. Some Belgians report that they received a warm welcome from Germans who believed Goebbels' claim that foreigners arriving in Germany were volunteers. Willem L recalled that upon the arrival of his transport in Aachen the German population showed great interest and a positive disposition towards the Belgians, "We [Belgians] from Tienen could understand the language they spoke very well and the population was very friendly". He later realised why they had received such a warm welcome, "I came to know why the population was so friendly, they considered us to be volunteers – the German propaganda was very well organised". He encountered similar treatment from his German work colleagues in Potsdam-Babelsburg, "I was received with open arms and friendship as if I was a collaborator. They refused to believe that I had been taken prisoner and could not return to Belgium".[96] Belgian deportees resented the common misconception that foreign workers were volunteers that was often repeated by Germans who had taken Goebbels' propaganda at face value.

[96] CEGES/SOMA, AA1260/50, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Willem L, 4.

Over time the attitudes of Germans who had day-to-day contact with foreign workers in the workplace often changed and even those who initially treated foreigners very harshly could change their approach. Lucien B recalled how outside factors prompted his German foreman to re-evaluate how he treated foreign workers:

> My boss – an SA commander – was enraged when I arrived and did not hesitate to hustle me, [or] hit me. But his attitude changed in the blink of an eye in the month that he learned that his son who was in the SS had disappeared in Italy and was in reality in a prison camp. He ended up even wanting to protect me from the cold during winter![97]

The capture of his son who was serving in the military prompted the worker to reflect critically upon his treatment of foreigners and led to greater understanding of the Belgian conscript's plight. Alfons L similarly recalled that there were tensions at his workplace between a German and French worker. It was clear that the German boss Pflaume could not stand the sight of Frenchman André. Alfons L recalled one of his outbursts:

> On a certain day the source of Pflaume's fits of rage came to light. During one of his outbursts of rage he lowered his trousers and enormous scar about fifteen centimetres in length could be seen on his abdomen. "Do you see that?" he screamed, "Your grandfather gave me that during the World War during combat with bayonets at the Somme".[98]

In the eyes of the German, the Frenchman stood for the French nation and those who had inflicted a terrible injury upon him during the First World War. In an effort to bridge the divide and minimise tensions, the French worker asked Alfons L to teach him how to express "Mr Pflaume, you are a good man" in German. When the Frenchman expressed these words to his supervisor the German "was so touched that he just stared at André with his mouth open and did not say a word". Even small gestures could bring about a measurable change in relations between foreigners and their German colleagues. Against all the odds, the two workers transcended this boundary over time and became close friends. These two accounts both point to the breakdown of Nazi stereotypes about foreigners and long-held resentments that stemmed from past military conflicts between their respective nations.

At other times, the approach adopted by Germans was shaped by completely random or arbitrary factors. Lucien B and the French workers with whom he shared his barracks felled a tree in the nearby woods illegally in order to heat their barracks. While trying to take the tree back to their barracks they were caught by the camp

[97] Ibid., AB1202, Lucien B, "Témoignage 1943-1945", 3.
[98] Ibid., AB2179, Alfons L, "Bommen op Berlin", 27.

guards and asked for their identity documents. Upon seeing that the Frenchmen came from Paris the guard smiled and exclaimed, "Ach, Paris. Beautiful Paris". The guard enumerated the beautiful sights of Paris where he spent the summer of 1940 and enjoyed his time. The men were able to build a rapport with the guard through this connection and he allowed the matter to pass without taking further action and the men simply faced a stern warning from their employer. Two Slavs were, by contrast, later sent to a concentration camp after they were caught felling a tree illegally.[99] The workers were under no illusion that their status as western Europeans and the guard's fond memories of Paris had ensured that they avoided serious consequences. Such experiences also reminded foreign workers that they could never really know how a German might react and left them with a feeling of uncertainty in their day-to-day dealings with Germans. Try as they might, the Nazi authorities were not able to exercise complete control over relations between the German population and foreigners. Some Germans were genuinely sympathetic to the plight of foreigners and treated them decently; others, however, favoured harsh treatment.

The ability to speak German and the establishment of good relations within the workplace and with the broader community could make a tremendous difference in one's material position in Germany. Jan A recorded in his diary that by July 1943 the packages that had provided foodstuffs and tobacco to supplement their rations that he had regularly received when he first arrived in Berlin no longer arrived. He and his colleagues sought out farmers in nearby Berlin-Staaken to purchase food to supplement their meagre rations. In addition to selling the men food, a local farmer offered to give the men food in exchange for their labour if they came to work for him in the evenings after work and on weekends.[100] The labour shortage meant that some German farmers sought to secure additional labour through bartering. Belgians enjoyed more freedom of movement and therefore had greater opportunities to obtain food to supplement their rations – either by purchasing it or bartering. This advantage was of course further reinforced in the case of those who could communicate with the local population.

Communication was, however, a two-way street and some Germans adopted a pro-active approach. A teenager during the war, Erich Neumann recalled that his mother applied to the labour office for two foreign workers when business flourished

[99] Ibid., AB1202, Lucien B, "Témoignage 1943-1945", 4-5.
[100] Ibid., AA1260/60, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jan A diary (dated 13.07.1943).

at her café in the western district of Charlottenburg. The labour office assigned two Belgian women: a German-speaking waitress; and a young girl in her early twenties to assist in the kitchen. Neumann recalled:

> Both of them came from Belgium and spoke amongst themselves predominantly in French. My mother didn't like this at all, so she took private lessons in French and paid for German lessons for the [younger] girl, [who] very quickly could speak German... The two very quickly became part of the family and enjoyed coming to work.[101]

While foreigners naturally preferred to speak their own language amongst themselves, Germans were often suspicious of those who spoke their native tongue. Seeing the benefits of better communication with foreign employees prompted some German employers to learn a foreign language. Valuing her employee, this small businesswoman also invested in language lessons for her employee, whereas many larger companies employed staff who spoke foreign languages to handle foreign employees.

Some Belgians found areas of mutual interest with German colleagues as well as other foreigners, "The young Germans taught me German songs, the Ukrainians taught me Ukrainian songs and the French taught me French songs".[102] German civilians were not forbidden from fraternising with western Europeans like Belgians and friendships did develop between the two groups. Belgians realised that many ordinary Germans were sick of the war, "We had the impression that many Germans were tired of iron discipline and also wanted to laugh and have some fun".[103] Like the foreign workers they worked alongside, many ordinary Germans wished that the war was over, and thus in this respect shared common ground with foreign workers who longed for the same thing. Many young Belgians were conscripted and sent to Germany at the time in their life when they would normally marry and settle down to start a family. Some Belgians met and fell in love with Germans during their time in Germany. Some married before the end of the war; however, this became increasingly difficult because couples intending to marry needed to supply a number of documents to the registry office in Germany and the Interior Ministry tightened the requirements to obtain a certificate confirming one's suitability for marriage in 1943. Belgian agricultural worker Frans P was conscripted and sent to work in a rubber factory in Berlin-Rudow in March 1943. During his time in Germany Frans P

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[101] Erich Neumann, unpublished memoir, quoted in Moorhouse, *Berlin at War*, 127-8.
[102] CEGES/SOMA, AA1260/50, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Willem L, 22.
[103] Ibid.

met German woman Gertrud H and the couple married in Berlin, and their first child was born in 1944. They departed Germany and settled in Belgium in August 1945.[104] The registry office records for Berlin from 1945 indicate that a number of Belgian men married German women once restrictions on marriage were lifted after the war.

Reports about foreign workers featured prominently in weekly *Wehrmacht* mood reports. By contrast with accounts that point to good relations between Belgians and Germans, these reports reveal that relations between Berliners and the large number of foreigners in the city became increasingly strained over time. Germans grumbled about the presence of foreigners who represented a further drain on scarce resources. Their frustrations frequently revolved around the city's limited housing and food supplies, access to air-raid shelters and crumbling transport infrastructure. The arrival of refugees fleeing the approaching Red Army in the east only served to exacerbate these tensions further. Germans objected to the presence of foreigners on the streets, in cinemas, in public houses, on the city's public transport and in air-raid shelters. Complaints commonly centred upon the claim that foreigners traded goods at exorbitant prices on the black market in places like Alexanderplatz. It was suggested that foreigners were hanging around the streets and were not engaged in work and also failed to contribute to communal efforts to clean up after bombing raids. Others were infuriated by the sight of drunken western Europeans, questioning the source of the alcohol and how foreign workers could afford large amounts of alcohol.

German inhabitants, who had grown accustomed to their role as masters over a helot population of foreign workers, increasingly complained about the behaviour of foreigners. The attitudes of many foreigners also clearly changed. Foreigners were acutely aware that the tide of the war had turned and Germany's impending defeat gave many foreigners greater confidence – confidence that often manifested itself in defiance of Germans. This defiance came as an affront to many Germans:

> Foreigners are always the first in the air-raid shelters and stand out in their objectionable [behaviour]. Most recently they have been especially insolent and sneering with respect to the aerial bombing raids, destruction and making corresponding remarks in their own native languages.[105]

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[104] SVG/DO, D53970/337225.

[105] *Wehrmacht* Mood Report (Nr.20: 21.2.–27.2.1945) quoted in Wette, Bremer, and Vogel, *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 290.

Having experienced years of privations as foreigners in Nazi Germany, it was with some pleasure that foreigners bore witness as the Germans finally reaped what they had sown. Staff at the maternity ward at Berlin's Charité hospital reported that a Russian woman who gave birth to a son in December 1944 refused to register the birth with the registry office. Infuriating officials and German patients, the Russian defiantly argued "she would soon be home anyway [because] the Russian armies are already in Germany".[106] Germans did not take kindly to the *Schadenfreude* of foreigners who scarcely concealed their pleasure at the bombing of Germany and the land invasion by Soviet and Allied troops.

In some parts of Berlin residents began to feel that their neighbourhoods had been inundated with foreigners. The writer Felix Hartlaub described the transformation that had taken place in some parts of Berlin, in a letter to his father in August 1944:

> As a consequence of the great transfer of people [from Berlin], the presence of the foreign element has become disproportionately conspicuous. In some streets and public houses one really hears not a single word of German spoken and so one has the feeling of strolling through a peculiar Babylon; a Babel of rubble and labour and tremendous expectations... In some neighbourhoods in which hardly any of the street signs are still standing, one gets a whiff of the atmosphere of the Parisian *banlieue*, the Italian piazza or the Ukrainian village square.[107]

The departure of men conscripted into the armed forces and the evacuation of children, the elderly and those who were not working brought a major demographic shift in Berlin. Germans living in districts that housed large numbers of foreigners began to feel increasingly threatened:

> In the Rosenthal district there are large foreign workers' camps. All the streets and public transport there are teeming with foreigners. According to more recent reports from the local population, foreigners are particularly insolent and brazen, above all during the evening.[108]

The impending closure of the local police branch in the Rosenthal district of Berlin-Pankow due to staff shortages left residents feeling exposed. Many Germans began to have grave misgivings about the number of foreigners in their midst. Berliner Ursula von Kardorff recorded in her diary entry of 30 November 1944:

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[106] *Wehrmacht* Mood Report (Nr.9: 4.12.–10.12.1944) quoted in Ibid., 179.
[107] Felix Hartlaub and Erna Krauss, *Felix Hartlaub in seinen Briefen* (Tübingen: R. Wunderlich, 1958), 219-20.
[108] *Wehrmacht* Mood Report (Nr.20: 21.2.–27.2.1945) quoted in Wette, Bremer, and Vogel, *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 289.

> The foreign workers are apparently exceptionally well organised. It is suggested that there are officers amongst them, sent by the various underground movements, who are well-equipped with weapons, as well as radios... There are twelve million foreign workers in Germany. Their own army. Some people call them the Trojan horse of today's war.[109]

Rumours that foreigners were armed abounded in Berlin and the fear that foreigners were a Trojan horse who would seek to destroy Germany from within is echoed in other accounts from the wartime period. *Wehrmacht* propaganda officers reported that towards the end of the war the population became increasingly concerned that firearms were in the hands of civilians, especially foreigners, and that "the many foreigners in Berlin could one day attack". It was a threat officers took seriously, urging that weapons searches be carried out amongst foreigners.[110] While many foreign workers were to be found amongst the ranks of the underground movement, the uprising of foreigners Berliners feared never came. In spite of the general suspicion of foreigners, some Germans did look upon foreigners more positively. Officials noted that they had frequently observed Germans discussing the recruitment of foreigners to the Waffen-SS. Germans apparently suggested that many foreigners, who had not necessarily been exactly positively disposed towards the Nazi regime upon their arrival in Germany, had joined the ranks of the Waffen-SS after hearing of how the Anglo-Americans were treating their fellow countrymen in the occupied territories in the west (see Appendix 18 on page 343 for information regarding the recruitment for Belgian fascist formations).[111] By contrast with those who regarded foreigners as a threat, some Germans came to regard western Europeans as fellow members of their community of fate.

In some cases individual Germans showed genuine empathy and understanding for the plight of foreigners. Erich Neumann recalled:

> Mother covered up the forbidden escapades of the two [Belgian women she employed] where she could. It was her duty to immediately provide a report to the police if one of the women did not arrive at work punctually... At some point neither came to work anymore. Mother and I were very sad. She delayed reporting the matter to the police from one day to the next. She

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[109] Ursula von Kardorff and Peter Hartl, *Berliner Aufzeichnungen, 1942-1945* (München: CH Beck, 1992), 265.
[110] *Wehrmacht* Mood Report (Nr.7: 20.11.–26.11.1944 & Nr.16: 22.1.–29.1.1945) quoted in Wette, Bremer, and Vogel, *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 163 & 234.
[111] *Wehrmacht* Mood Report (Nr.3: 24.10–31.10.1944) quoted in ibid., 143.

wanted to allow the two women enough time and a head start in case they were attempting to flee to their homeland.[112]

In an act of selflessness, Neumann's mother sought to aid the women in their flight, in spite of her obligation to report their flight and the potential consequences. The elder of the two Belgians remained in Berlin and returned to visit her former employer at the end of the war, the two women rejoicing when they were reunited.

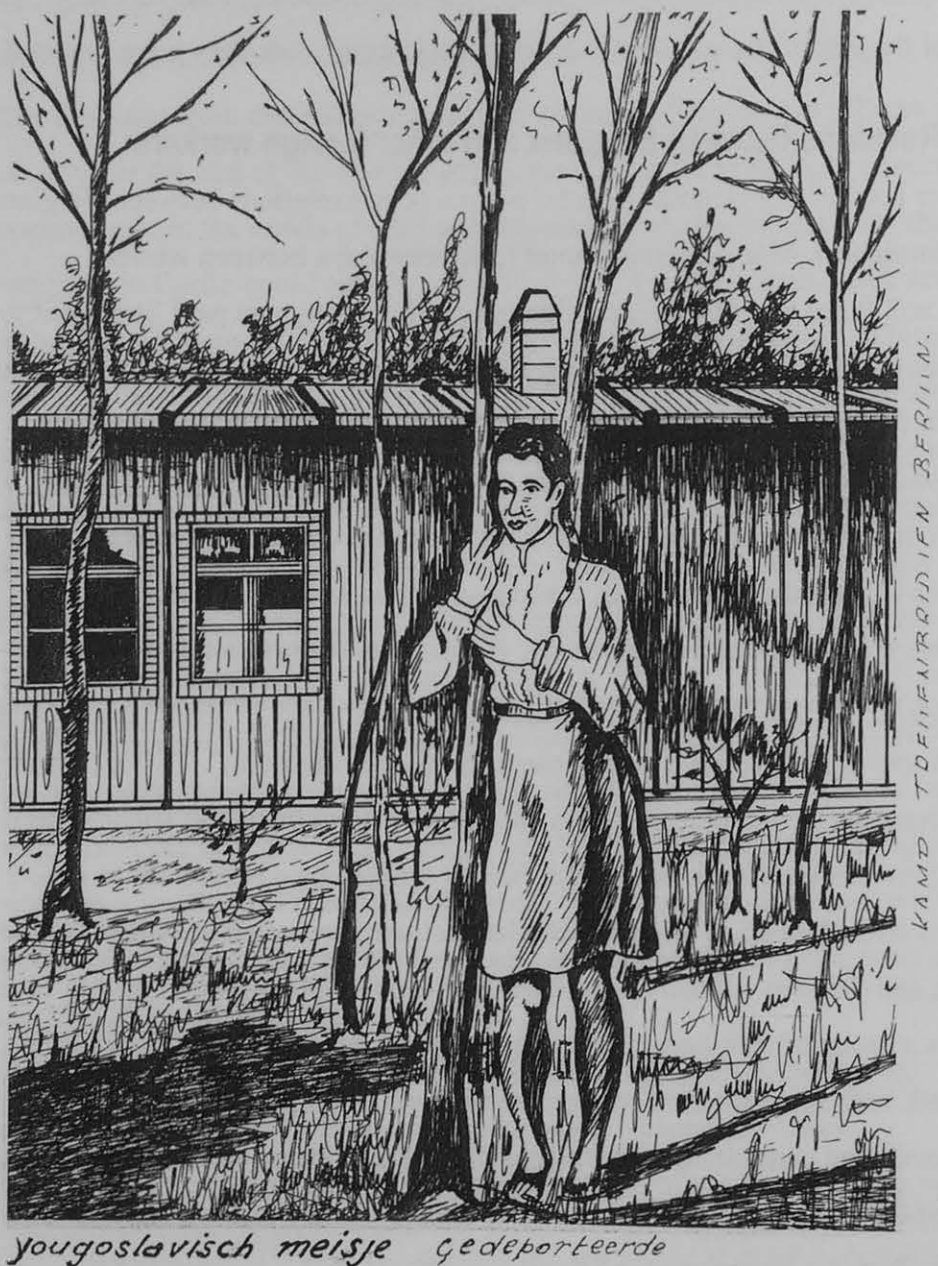
8. Relations between Belgians and other foreign workers

The postwar accounts of Belgian workers point to close relations between Belgians and other foreigners. Many accounts point to relationships between western Europeans and Poles and *Ostarbeiter*, illustrating that foreigners paid little heed to the strictures of the Nazi racial hierarchy. Lucien B recalled how he and a colleague were sent to deliver coal by horse and cart. They passed a farm where a Polish woman working as a servant brought them a handful of apples from the orchard. The apples were taken back to the camp and shared between the men – it was the only apple Lucien B ate during his time in Germany.[113] The woman's kindness was a cherished memory of his time in Germany. Alfons L also emphasised the strong relationships that developed between camp residents, "All the wonderful friendships, all the fondness [that developed] in the camps was overwhelming".[114] The portraits Willem L drew during his time in Berlin are a testament to the warm friendships that developed between Belgian men and *Ostarbeiter* women (see Figure 13 on page 216. Photographs from the period also indicate that Belgian men often had close contact with Polish and Russian women during their free time. A photograph taken in June 1943 shows a group of Belgians from a camp in Eberswalde, north-east of Berlin, taking a walk with some Russian women (see Figure 14 on page 217). Some Belgians developed committed relationships with other foreign workers. Following the lifting of the marriage ban, a number of Belgians married women from Poland, Yugoslavia, Russia, Croatia and the Ukraine in May 1945.[115] Around 4,000

[112] Erich Neumann, unpublished memoir. A copy of page 30 of this unpublished memoir was kindly provided by Richard Moorhouse.
[113] CEGES/SOMA, AB1202, Lucien B, "Témoignage 1943-1945", 5.
[114] Ibid., AA1260/50, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Willem L, 40.
[115] SVG/DO, R.149/Tr.4.086, List of forty-two Belgians who married in Berlin Standesamt 6 (registry office).

Ostarbeiterinnen – women of Ukrainian, Russian and Belorussian descent – settled in Belgium after the end of the war.[116]

Figure 13: Portrait of a Yugoslavian deportee by Willem L



Source: CEGES/SOMA AA1216/50, Enquête Travail Obligatoire, Willem L.

[116] Machteld Venken, "'Signing a Meaning to War Memory', [abstract from Paper titled given at the 'November 1948 and All That: Soviet Music, Ideology and Power' Conference, 27-8 November 2009]," The Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, Cambridge University, http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/page/468/machteld-venken.htm. Also see Venken's work on Polish and *Ostarbeiter* women who settled in Belgium after the war: Machteld Venken, "Gemengd huwen, nationaliteit en de verschillen voor mannen en vrouwen: Poolse oudgedienden en *Ostarbeiterinnen* in België tijdens de Koude Oorlog," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 5, no. 1 (2008).

Relations between Belgians and other foreigners were often also underpinned by laws of barter and exchange. Alfons L recalled how he and his friend Casimir made the acquaintance of Estonian twins. The men spent the evening in the company of the twins sitting on a bench, holding hands and looking up at the stars. The Belgians shared their Belgian gingerbread with the twins and felt very happy. A few days later he saw one of the twins in the company of a Frenchman who was sharing meat paste that he had received from home.[117] This sight brought the realisation that the women had exploited their naivety in order to obtain additional food and that their affections were only feigned.

Figure 14: Eberswalde camp. Group of Belgians and Russian women on a walk

CEGES/SOMA: image database, Nr.5181

9. Social and cultural life

Many young Belgians lived with their families before they left for Germany and came from provincial towns and villages, so their departure for Germany provided their first taste of freedom. Liberated from the yoke of their families and Belgium's strict Catholic culture, many young Belgians welcomed their new freedoms and independence and relished the opportunities that life in a big city had to offer.

[117] CEGES/SOMA, AB2179, Alfons L, "Bommen op Berlin", 21.

Belgians recalled life in Berlin: the cafés, theatre, cabaret, cinema, dance halls, attending the circus, visiting the sights of the capital, swimming at Wannsee or Müggelsee, the bordellos in the city's red-light district, and their first amorous relationships. One Belgian woman later recalled that her time in wartime Berlin was "the best time of her life": her wages were good, she could go out and there was much pleasure to be had.[118] Notwithstanding the privations Belgian workers suffered and the Allied bombing raids that became an enduring memory of their time in Germany, Belgians also pointed to more positive aspects of life in Berlin, particularly during the early war years before bombing began to take a heavy toll on the city. Activities were also organised in larger camps where workers held theatrical and musical evenings, boxing matches and sporting events. The DAF also organised a range of activities for Belgian workers in Berlin. Figures 15-18 on pages 220-221 show a social event organised for French-speaking Walloons in Berlin. The Franco-Belgian club Le Pont was also active in Berlin from 1940 to 1945, organising social gatherings for francophones. Figure shows a performance held at the club's facilities in the Tiergarten in the heart of Berlin. The German authorities also catered for Belgian tastes in entertainment, organising performances by Belgian performers in Germany. The account of Dutch conscripted worker Anne's time in Berlin has been recounted in Marloes van Westrienen's historical-anthropological study of young Dutch men who were deported to Nazi Germany, "Anne thinks it's wonderful: film, theatre, brothels and pubs, but after six months he has seen enough. He takes photos with the boys. They put up a sign 'Berlin, how long to go?' and they all stand around it".[119] While the city initially offered much entertainment, some western Europeans soon tired of it and longed for home. As the war wore on it is doubtful that foreign workers had the energy or inclination to participate in Berlin's rich social and cultural offerings, engage in educational programs or play sport, especially as their work hours were extended and the bombing of the city made daily life increasingly difficult.

[118] Gerlinda Swillen, *Koekkoekskind: door de vijand verwekt [1940-1945]* (Antwerp: Meulenhoff/Manteau, 2009), 42. Interview with war child Julian V who recounted her mother's experiences in Berlin.
[119] Marloes van Westrienen, *Dwang Arbeiders: Nederlandse jongens tewerkgesteld in het Derde Rijk* (Amsterdam; Antwerp: Uitgeverij Contact, 2008), 101.

Figure 15: Group of Wallonian workers at the Delphi in Berlin, where the Brussels Orchestra is fronted by Jean Omer

CEGES/SOMA, image database, Nr. 5041.

Figure 16: Group of Walloons at a café at Berlin Alexanderplatz

CEGES/SOMA, image database, Nr.5042.

Figure 17: French and Belgians on a steamboat trip on the Müggelberge

CEGES/SOMA, image database, Nr. 5235.

Figure 18: A Performance at the Le Pont club in Berlin

CEGES/SOMA, image database, Nr.5235.

10. Industrial management and discipline

AELs served the dual purposes of racial and political persecution and enforcing industrial discipline. Himmler released a decree on 28 May 1941 providing for the imprisonment of those who refused to work, as well as workers who broke their labour contracts. He elucidated the intentions behind the decree, "The prisoners should be required to work to show them the detrimental effect their behaviour has on the people, to train them for regular work and to set an example that serves as a warning and a deterrent for others".[120] The first AELs were established in the spring and summer of 1940, including the AEL Wuhlheide in Berlin, and the network of AELs expanded rapidly. The initial eight AELs could accommodate 2,000 prisoners; however, by the final stages of the war there were over 200 AELs across Germany and the occupied territories, housing approximately 40,000 prisoners.[121] A former employee of the *Gestapo* coordinating office in Berlin later recalled that the majority of those transferred to AELs were foreign workers.[122] The most common reason for imprisonment in an AEL was leaving one's workplace without permission, with around 40,000 cases of absconding every month.[123] Other reasons for imprisonment in an AEL included arguments with one's boss or work colleagues, as well as political offences.

Daily life at AELs was characterised by constant hunger, unheated and overcrowded bug-ridden barracks, inadequate medical care, hard labour, brutal maltreatment and frequent roll-calls cruelly intended to make life harder for prisoners. Conditions in AELs were on a par with those in German concentration camps. As a testament to the brutal treatment to which AEL prisoners were subjected, in May 1944 Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Head of the Security Police and Security Service reported to Hanns Albin Rauter, Higher SS and Police Leader in the occupied Netherlands:

> The Security Police's AELs are anything but a holiday. The inmates' working conditions and living conditions are generally harder than in a concentration

[120] Quoted in Cord Pagenstecher, "Arbeitserziehungslager," in *Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager: Arbeitserziehungslager, Ghettos, Jungendschutzlager, Polizeihaftlager, Sonderlager, Zigeunerlager, Zwangsarbeitslager*, ed. Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel (Munich: CH Beck 2009), 76.
[121] Ibid., 85.
[122] Quoted in ibid., 83.
[123] Gabriele Lotfi, *KZ der Gestapo: Arbeitserziehungslager im Dritten Reich* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2000), 229.

> camp. This is necessary in order to achieve the desired effect and is possible because the individual prisoner's stay only lasts a few weeks, or a few months at most.[124]

Mortality rates remained lower at AELs only by virtue of the fact that prisoners were imprisoned for a limited period – rather than indefinitely.[125] The official maximum term of imprisonment for those sent to an AEL was generally fifty-six days because labour shortages meant that employers wanted their workers to return to work, although this was frequently exceeded.[126] The constant turnover of prisoners inhibited the building of group solidarity within the prisoner population and also meant that resisters within the prisoner population were soon betrayed.[127] Former inmate of the AEL Fehrbellin, Maria Andrzejewska poignantly described the effect the harsh regime at AELs had on the mind and body:

> In the first days in the camp I lived in constant fear. I tried to adhere to the camp rules in order to avoid being hit with a truncheon; they usually hit you in the head with the truncheon. Later a kind of internal paralysis followed, simply a renunciation of life. The pain in the hands with the open blisters and feet full of wounds clouded my senses. I was without thoughts. I lived as in a trance, and it did not matter to me whether I survived to see the next day. Even on the day of release I did not feel any joy.[128]

Belgians recalled that colleagues who were sent to an AEL returned physically and mentally broken. The physical transformation AEL inmates underwent served as a deterrent to other workers. AELs therefore proved to be a very effective instrument for disciplining both Germans and foreigners.

Three AELs were established in Berlin: the AEL Wuhlheide in the south east of Berlin; the AEL Grossbeeren in the district of Teltow-Fläming south west of Berlin in early September 1942; and the AEL Fehrbellin 50km north-west of Berlin. Estimates of the number of workers who passed through the AEL Wuhlheide indicate that as many as 25,000 prisoners were imprisoned at the camp during the war.[129] The camp housed around a thousand male prisoners – the overwhelming majority of whom were *Ostarbeiter*, while French, Dutch, Belgian and German

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[124] Quoted in ibid., 227.
[125] Pagenstecher, "Arbeitserziehungslager," 85-6.
[126] Christine Steer, "Das Arbeitserziehungslager Wuhlheide," in *Versklavt und fast vergessen. Zwangsarbeit im Berliner Bezirk Lichtenberg 1939-1945*, ed. Bezirksamt Lichtenberg von Berlin (Berlin: Trafo-Verlag, 2001), 15.
[127] Pagenstecher, "Arbeitserziehungslager," 86.
[128] Quoted in Cord Pagenstecher, "AEL Fehrbellin. Ein Frauen-Straflager für Berliner Zwangsarbeiterinnen," in *Abgeschlossene Kapitel*, ed. Sabine Moller, *Studien zum Nationalsozialismus in der Edition discord* (Tübingen: 2002), 39.
[129] Steer, "Versklavt und fast vergessen," 48.

nationals made up a smaller proportion of inmates.[130] The camp was established at a vacant premises that had housed railway workers at the goods yard at the Grossbeeren railway station. Prisoners at the camp were put to work principally for the German railways laying tracks, bunkers, levees, air-raid trenches and completed concreting, as well as on the construction of canals. The AEL Fehrbellin housed exclusively women – both foreign workers and German women – and held between 300 and 500 prisoners. There were seventy Belgian inmates at the camp on 8 April 1945.[131] Conditions in the camp were typical of the conditions in other AELs.

Even seemingly minor misdemeanours could result in imprisonment at an AEL. Belgian technical draftsman Marcel G was entranced by the spectacle of aerial bombing, taking a photograph, which he planned to keep as a souvenir. However, he was subsequently denounced by fellow Belgian Barthélemy C and arrested on 12 September 1943 and was transferred to the AEL Grossbeeren.[132] With Berlin under attack from Allied bombing, seemingly insignificant acts were politicised. As a testament to the harsh regime at AELs, Marcel G died from sepsis just two months after his arrival at Grossbeeren on 15 November 1943. He was one of fifty-six Belgians who died at the camp between February 1943 and April 1945. With the exception of Marcel G, the cause of death of Belgians who died at the AEL was not recorded. According to the account of a Dutch prisoner who worked as a nurse in the camp infirmary, many of the prisoners succumbed to illnesses such as typhoid, influenza and pneumonia.[133] Brutal treatment and physical exhaustion were clearly factors in the high mortality rates.

As the war continued the network of AELs expanded even further, culminating in the establishment of new categories of AEL: reception camp and the "education" camp run by large companies or municipal authorities. These camps were generally established on factory grounds or in empty municipal buildings and were run by the police authorities rather than the *Gestapo*.[134] The *Gestapo* was

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[130] Lotfi, *KZ der Gestapo*, 191.
[131] Pagenstecher, "AEL Fehrbellin," 36.
[132] SVG/DO, SDR 62719, D ad 517/304748 and PP ad 6462/53226. After the war Barthélemy C was tried by a military court in Liège and condemned for his denunciation of Marcel G. After the war Marcel G's mother petitioned for her son to be officially recognised as a political prisoner. The Belgian authorities rejected this claim on the basis that his offence was not a political act. He was, however, subsequently recognised as a conscript.
[133] ITS/ARCH/Arbeitserziehungslager Ordner 1, S34-7. List of prisoner deaths at the AEL Grossbeeren.
[134] Lotfi, *KZ der Gestapo*, 237.

increasingly overburdened and an internal report from the firm Osram GmbH dating from October 1942 notes that "the *Gestapo* is so heavily burdened that it can only act in the most blatant cases".[135] Unable to obtain assistance from the *Gestapo*, except in the most serious cases, companies also increasingly resorted to dealing with problem employees internally. Punishment camps or "arrest rooms" were set up by Berlin companies in order to deal with problem employees expeditiously. AEG set up two "arrest rooms", one for women and one for men, at the Johannisthal camp in 1944, with the approval of Commissioner Rothfeldt at the *Gestapo* headquarters.[136] Workers were imprisoned in the "arrest rooms" for one to five days. According to company officials, most of the workers held in the arrest rooms were locked up as a punishment for loafing. The Berlin City Administration also established an "education" camp in Berlin-Frohnau. Little is known about such camps or "arrest rooms", although references spread across various sources indicate that the introduction of such measures were a widespread phenomenon.[137] The benefit for employers of establishing their own punishment camps or "arrest rooms" was that they did not relinquish control of employees to the *Gestapo* and could move swiftly to deal with problem employees. The accounts of some Belgians also indicate that forced recruitment for Belgian units deployed on the Eastern Front was used as a disciplinary measure to punish refusal to work or troublesome employees. It is likely that increasing overcrowding in disciplinary camps and the deteriorating military situation in the east led to the forced recruitment of Belgians for German military and paramilitary units. This recruitment drive was largely ineffectual and few workers were convinced to sign up on a voluntary basis; officials therefore applied coercive measures to sign up Belgian workers.

11. Crime and punishment

Law and order was particularly important for the civilian population in wartime Germany. Indeed, police log books from the final days of the war show that German citizens continued to report minor crimes even as the artillery of the Red Army approached Berlin in 1945. Using post-war lists compiled by BLOs and records held

[135] Layer-Jung, "Überwachung und Bestrafung," 86.
[136] LAB, A Rep. 227-02: Nr.53, letter sent by AEG Apparatebaufabrik Berlin-Treptow to Commissioner Rothfeldt at the Gestapo headquarters, Department (*Referat*) IV 3b, Berlin C2 (dated 14.09.1944).
[137] Bräutigam, "Zwangsarbeit in Berlin," 49.

at the Red Cross International Tracing Service, I have compiled a database of approximately 900 individual records relating to crimes committed by Belgians in Berlin. We can probably safely assume that the available police, judicial and prison records are by no means complete because many records were destroyed by bombing in Berlin.[138] While the information recorded about the crimes committed is not always complete, 341 records contain details of the offence and therefore provide a good sample of the offences. Secondly, I have examined the prosecution and imprisonment records of individual Belgians in Berlin, using police files and judicial records from the Berlin State Archive and copies of judicial files relating to the prosecution of Belgians collected by BLOs after the war.

The Reich Statistics Office reported a significant increase in the number of crimes committed by foreigners in Berlin from the first years of the war: the number of crimes committed by foreigners as a percentage of overall crime rose from 2.5 percent in 1939 to 13.4 percent in 1941.[139] This increase in the number of crimes committed by foreigners in Berlin was a quite natural consequence of the increasing number of foreigners who had been mobilised to power Germany's war economy. The report's authors noted, however, that theft represented a much higher percentage of offences committed by foreigners when compared with the crimes committed by Germans: theft represented 58.3 percent of recorded crimes committed by foreigners, compared with 44.5 percent for Germans.[140] Herbert emphasises:

> The entire complex of barter, black marketeering and petty crime should be seen as part of the spread of a *social substructure* among foreign workers that eluded the control of the German authorities. It did not function in accordance with the principles of political resistance and solidarity, but rather with the dicta of the marketplace, of national and social hierarchies, of force.[141]

Indeed, Herbert observes that this social substructure may have assured the survival of many *Ostarbeiter* whose meagre rations scarcely covered the level needed to sustain life.

The crimes committed by Belgians in Berlin fall into a range of categories; however, it is clear that theft, burglary and the receipt of stolen goods constitute the largest number of offences committed (see Appendix 20 on page 355). I will

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[138] Notable gaps appear in the records include prison records for the remand prisons in Berlin-Lichtenberg and Berlin-Neukölln, which were occupied by the Red Army after the war.
[139] ITS/ARCH/Inform. Justizvollzuganstalten Ordner 47 (I - 487, – NG 908), reference on page 142.
[140] Ibid., 162-3.
[141] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 329.

therefore focus on theft. It is worth commenting briefly on the issue of offences related to industrial matters, such as refusal to work and sabotage. While workers were prosecuted and imprisoned due to breach of contract and refusal to work in a small number of cases, these offences were usually handled outside the judicial process and thus do not appear in the judicial or prison records.[142] Police log books for Order Police Station 145 at Berlin-Siemensstadt, for example, show that Siemens' factory police referred twenty-two Belgians to the Order Police between June and December 1941.[143] In cases where an employer called upon the police or *Gestapo* to deal with a recalcitrant worker they might only receive an official warning.

Theft represented 49 percent of the recorded crimes committed by Belgians (54 percent and 40 percent for men and women respectively). Burglary represented a further 5.28 percent of the recorded crimes committed by Belgians, including some that were carried out by men and women working in gangs. Receiving stolen goods accounted for a further 3.81 percent. While the percentage of recorded crimes represented by theft was higher amongst Belgians than the German population, it was also lower than the percentage that theft represented for Berlin's foreign population as a whole. The privileged position Belgians occupied in the Nazi racial hierarchy meant that they were paid wages on a par with their German counterparts. Additionally, many Belgians were able to supplement their rations with foodstuffs sent by relatives in Belgium and also often received tobacco, which was a useful commodity that could be traded on the black market. Belgians did not share the same desperate plight as their Soviet counterparts, and as a consequence were less likely to resort to petty crime. Finally, while one might expect that the number of convictions for theft would increase over the course of the war as living conditions worsened, the number of Belgians convicted of theft peaked in 1942/1943.

In February 1933 the Nazis appointed new Police Presidents in a number of German cities including Berlin, where Nazi hardliners declared war on crime.[144] During the war Berlin officials were ordered by Goebbels to issue harsh punishments to those caught plundering goods. He claimed in his diary to have support from

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[142] It is notable that none of the Belgians who died at the AEL Grossbeeren, for example, had criminal records.
[143] LAB, B Rep 020, Nr.6939.
[144] Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: consent and coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 35.

Hitler for these measures: "I report to the Führer about my harsh punishment measures against individual cases of plundering in Berlin. The Führer gives me his approval".[145] Robert Gellately has emphasised that the "Nazi approach to crime was not to search out its deeper social causes, but to enforce the existing laws more vigorously".[146] Many Belgians lived in fear of Nazi terror and this terror naturally intensified, as increasingly arbitrary and draconian punishments were meted out by Berlin's courts. Foreigners were conscious that relatively minor crimes could have serious consequences. This was especially true of theft. Thefts were frequently carried out by workers who had particular opportunities by virtue of their jobs, such as postal and railway workers who often had access to packages. Others carried out opportunistic thefts in camps, the workplace or places such as railway stations. The looting of bombed out buildings was considered a particularly serious crime because of the impact it had on the population's morale. Those who were caught looting were regarded as *Volksschädlinge* or individuals who were harmful to the people. Police and judicial files reveal that many crimes were committed by Belgians who were no longer part of the labour process. Some, for example, had gone on the run after committing a crime, others had begun to earn a living through illegitimate means soon after their arrival in Berlin. Indeed, in response to negative public opinion following the introduction of conscription in October 1942, the Military Administration targeted known black market traders. The conscription of black market traders was probably a miscalculation, as conscripts who had not been integrated into the Belgian workforce probably resisted integration into the German labour force and simply reverted to their usual method of earning a living. A growing number of Belgians became part of Berlin's criminal subculture.

One of the central questions of my study of prison and judicial records is the question whether Belgians were more harshly treated as the war progressed. Analysis of the sentences imposed upon Belgians for the crime of theft shows that the prison sentences issued by the courts varied enormously, ranging from one month to four years hard labour. Some Belgians convicted of theft by Berlin courts were sentenced to death and executed. There is no apparent link between the point during the war when the offender was convicted and the severity of the sentence imposed. This was

[145] Elke Fröhlich, ed., *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, vol. 7: Teil 2, Diktate 1941-45, Januar - März 1943 (Munich; New Providence; London; Paris K.G. Sauer Verlag, 1993), 101.
[146] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 35.

all part of the arbitrary and unpredictable way the penal system worked – for Germans too. What is clear is that the sentences issued by the courts were more punitive in cases where the crime was deemed to have a detrimental effect on the people, such as looting. Belgian Jean La led an eighteen strong criminal gang that carried out a series of burglaries in Berlin and was also accused of procurement. He had previously been convicted for theft and burglary in 1942 and had been sentenced to a year in prison as a minor. The gang was predominantly made up of Belgian men, but also included a Belgian woman and a German woman. Some members of the group had previously been convicted of theft and burglary, while others had been imprisoned in AELs and concentration camps for breaches of labour contract. Regarded as an "asocial" who was harmful to the people, Jean La was sent directly to the Neuengamme Concentration Camp near Hamburg following his arrest in October 1944, while other gang members were also sent to concentration camps.[147]

Individuals who committed a series of offences received tougher sentences than those who had perhaps committed only one opportunistic theft, as multiple offences were seen to establish a pattern of behaviour. Repeat offenders, as well as those who were not engaged in gainful employment and instead earned a living through crime, were branded as "asocial" by the German authorities and tended to face more punitive sentences. Turning to the question of whether Walloons and Flemings were treated any differently by the German authorities, no apparent differences in the treatment of the two groups can be discerned from the police and judicial records. Firstly, the German authorities listed the nationality of offenders as "Belgian" and I found no references to "Walloons" or "Flemings" in the police or judicial records. Moreover, the examination of the sentences imposed by the courts provides no evidence to suggest that the two groups were treated differently. It is therefore clear that social criteria were far more important than racial distinctions between Flemings and Walloons in determining the sentencing of Belgian offenders.

After sentencing, most Belgians saw out their prison sentences in Berlin. Convicts had often already served much of their sentence while on remand. Belgian convicts serving longer sentences were often transferred to penal institutions outside Berlin, probably due to overcrowding. These institutions included the Brandenburg-Görden penitentiary, the Luckau penitentiary in Brandenburg and the prison camp at

[147] LAB, A Pr.Br.Rep. 030-02-04: Nr.20.

Rodgau, in Hesse. A number of Belgians were also transferred to the Sonnenburg Concentration Camp, which served as a satellite institution for the Berlin police authorities. Belgian convicts were undoubtedly subject to a harsh disciplinary regime during their imprisonment. Nikolaus Wachsmann emphasises, however, that, by contrast with concentration camp inmates, most convicts survived their imprisonment.[148] This conclusion is borne out in the records relating to Belgians who were imprisoned in Berlin, which do not show significant numbers of deaths in Berlin's prisons.

Looting carried particularly heavy penalties, especially during the final stages of the war when those caught looting could be shot on the spot. Thousands of foreigners – overwhelmingly Poles and *Ostarbeiter* – were executed by the security services during the final weeks of the war for looting.[149] The case of Belgian Fernand B and Frenchman Marcel Be who were convicted of theft by the Berlin State Court in mid February 1945 and executed on 9 March 1945 illustrates that western Europeans could also face a similar fate in the final weeks of the war.[150] Although justice was swift, the men were not executed summarily and were still afforded a "trial" to determine their guilt.[151] This case illustrates that western Europeans were afforded due process – as far as this still existed within Germany's court system. A closer examination of Belgian deaths provides little evidence that substantial numbers of Belgians were subject to summary executions as the war drew to a close. Interestingly, while the number of Belgians who were convicted of looting remained relatively low, a closer reading of the police and judicial files leads to the conclusion that many Belgians who had been caught looting were actually prosecuted for the lesser crime of theft. In such cases judges did nevertheless issue harsher sentences. The decision by the judicial authorities to prosecute many Belgians who had been caught looting for the lesser crime of theft is further evidence of the more lenient treatment they received from the judicial authorities. All this leads to the conclusion that, even during the final stages of the war, the German authorities continued to treat western European offenders much more leniently than *Ostarbeiter*.

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[148] Nikolaus Wachsmann, *Hitler's prisons: Legal terror in Nazi Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 228.
[149] Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 210.
[150] SVG/DO, R.429/Tr.64271, List of judicial cases involving Belgians in Berlin prepared by a BLO in 1950.
[151] Ibid.

The analysis of seventy-eight death sentences imposed upon Belgians by Berlin's courts during the war shows that forty-two Belgians were sentenced to death for high treason, spying during wartime or other oppositional activities. The execution records for Berlin are somewhat deceptive because a number of Belgians who stood accused of high treason or oppositional activities were transported from Belgium or other parts of Germany to Berlin to face trial. Prisoners from western Europe began arriving in the Reich from 1941. These prisoners were initially sentenced by military courts in the occupied territories before they were transferred to German penal institutions. However, from 1942 the ordinary court system in Germany became more involved in the terror against civilian populations in western and northern Europe. The German authorities in occupied western Europe instituted a policy of transferring those who were arrested for involvement in the resistance to Germany. In September 1942 Hitler ordered that arrested civilians who could not be quickly condemned to death by military courts in occupied territories within one week of their arrest should be transferred to Germany for trial. Political opponents were transferred to Germany where they awaited trial before the People's Court or Special Court for crimes including sabotage, spying in wartime and high treason. By late March 1943 there were some 12,013 prisoners in penal institutions inside Germany from western European states (10,804 men; 1,209 women).[152] Civilian opponents to Nazi rule in occupied western Europe were secretly deported to Germany. The Nazis intended that opponents of the Military Administration would disappear, and their friends and family would never hear from them again. This cloak of secrecy surrounding "Night and Fog" prisoners was maintained and was not lifted even after their deaths: relatives were not informed, farewell letters were suppressed; and their bodies were buried secretly.[153] This policy was intended to engender uncertainty and fear in the occupied territories and to act as a deterrent against anti-Nazi activity. German courts imposed death sentences upon 258 Belgian "Night and Fog" prisoners. The People's Court in Berlin handed down 225 of these death sentences, while the Essen Special Court and the Oppeln Special Court handed down

[152] Wachsmann, *Hitler's prisons*, 272.
[153] Excerpt of letter from SS-Sturmbannführer Erich Deppner, Head of Department IV (*Gestapo*), Security Police and Security Service Command in the occupied Netherlands to all branches, posts and camps (dated 12.07.1943) in Ludwig Nestler, *Die Faschistische Okkupationspolitik in Belgien, Luxemburg und den Niederlanden (1940-1945)*, Europa unterm Hakenkreuz (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1990), 219.

thirty-one and two death sentences respectively.[154] Eleven Belgians were executed in Berlin for membership of terrorist gangs. Finally, twenty-one Belgians, or over a quarter of those who were sentenced to death, had been convicted of theft or looting. The examination of those who were executed for theft shows that executions were carried out throughout the war – not simply during the last years of the war. Indeed, the majority of Belgians who were sentenced to death for theft were sentenced in 1943, coinciding with the peak in the number of Belgians convicted of theft. Thus perhaps these punitive sentences were a response to an increasing wave of thefts committed by foreigners. Of course, not all of those who were caught committing a crime were afforded due legal process. Some foreign workers were subject to summary justice. Willem L recounted that a Ukrainian who was caught stealing potatoes was shot dead.[155] The Nazi authorities used summary justice to terrorise and instil fear into Germans and foreigners alike.

Goebbels feared that Berlin's foreign workers might revolt. He wrote on 9 March 1943, "Should it ever come to attempts to start a revolt amongst the foreign workers in Berlin, the Führer will send the SS Bodyguard Regiment [Adolf Hitler] to the capital; they set an example that will curb the passion for such excess amongst enthusiasts".[156] Herbert emphasises, "Those who feared that foreigners might set up a kind of 'internal front' failed to comprehend their desperate plight, especially that of eastern workers. It is not surprising that there were virtually no western workers among the bandits, although the number of Belgian, Dutch and French workers in the Rhineland was especially large".[157] By contrast, some of those Belgians sent to the city to work became part of the criminal subculture that developed in Berlin. A number of Belgians workers sent to Germany abandoned their jobs and went underground, earning their living through crime, in some cases forming criminal gangs. Some Belgian women turned to prostitution, plying their trade in clubs and bars; some lived solely from prostitution, while others used prostitution to supplement their meagre wages. Police records for the period also indicate that Belgian men were accused of acting as pimps. The Hotel International and the Zum Panther became known haunts for those looking to buy black market goods or solicit prostitutes. This criminal subculture formed in part as a reaction to the treatment they

[154] Ibid., 70.
[155] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/50, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Willem L, 31.
[156] Fröhlich, ed., *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, 514.
[157] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 368.

received as foreigners in Nazi Germany and the harsh conditions in which they lived and worked. Berlin's geographical location in relation to Belgium also helps to explain why a number of Belgians became part of the criminal subculture in Berlin. By contrast with Belgians who were deployed in western regions such as the Ruhr, Belgians deployed in Berlin had no real chance of making their way back to Belgium if they breached their labour contract. However, Berlin was a large city and it was possible for individuals to go underground, evading the authorities.

12. End of hostilities

In the final chaotic weeks of the war as the Battle for Berlin waged around them, any semblance of normal life had become impossible for Berlin's inhabitants. Residents lived day-to-day. With the city under siege and without water, gas or electricity, many Berliners took to cellars or public bunkers, occasionally venturing out to search for food in the ruins of the city when there was a break in the fighting. Those who emerged witnessed a shocking scene: the city was in ruins and death all around them. After the din that accompanied the Battle of Berlin, a deathly silence finally fell over the city when hostilities concluded on 2 May 1945. Much to the frustration of Belgians who had been working in Berlin, repatriation took some time due to damage to bridges and the rail network. Some headed off in the direction of the Elbe on foot with their belongings in a cart. Most Belgians who had been deployed in Berlin were repatriated between late May and August, while a few returned as late as 1947 or 1948.

13. Conclusions

This study of the experiences of Belgian workers in Berlin demonstrates that their privileged status as western Europeans brought many material advantages and ensured that they enjoyed better living conditions and health services. As a result western Europeans had greater prospects of survival compared to their counterparts from eastern Europe and Poland. The preferential treatment afforded to western Europeans was maintained even during the final stages of the war. An important distinction must be made, however, in relation to the material advantages western Europeans enjoyed due to their elevated position in the Nazi racial hierarchy and the benefits individual foreigners were able to secure by virtue of their linguistic skills. As speakers of a Germanic language, Flemish and Dutch workers, in particular,

readily learned the German language. A command of German brought a number of advantages. In the workplace, foreign workers who could speak German were easier to train and oversee. They were also more likely to be assigned skilled technical jobs that attracted higher wages. Workers who had a good command of German were also able to secure better jobs, such as translators in the workplace or in camps. As the individual stories clearly illustrate, even a basic command of German could significantly improve relations between foreign workers and their overseers. A command of the German language also brought many advantages because it enabled foreign workers to try to improve their situation pro-actively: they could defend their rights and raise complaints about their living or working conditions; they could seek private accommodation; the ability to communicate with the German population also provided greater opportunities to purchase additional food or work in exchange for food. These opportunities were, of course, also available to western Europeans because they were afforded greater freedom of movement. Finally, the consequences of not being able to speak German played out with tragic results in the case of Jules H.[158]

Turning to the distinction made between Flemings and Walloons, there is little concrete evidence to confirm that their differing positions within the Nazi racial hierarchy brought substantive differences in their living and working conditions or the treatment they received. The study of the accommodation of Belgian workers in Berlin has illustrated that the living conditions of Belgian workers varied greatly. Most employers arranged housing for their foreign workers and employers therefore played a key role in determining the living conditions of foreign workers. Foreign employees were generally housed together with workers of the same nationality and this segregation was maintained even in the last months of the war; however, the approach adopted by German employers in relation to the housing of foreign employees varied from company to company. AEG, for example, housed many Belgian employees in private accommodation or in foreign workers' homes rather than in large camps, whereas some employers housed their employees almost exclusively in large camps that housed hundreds of residents. While different national groups were segregated, and Flemings and Walloons were not housed together, there is little evidence to suggest that there were substantive differences in

[158] See pages 196-7 and Appendix 16 on page 339.

the living conditions of the different national groupings from western Europe. The examination of the sentencing of Belgian offenders has also shown there is little evidence that Flemings were afforded better treatment than Walloons by the judicial authorities or that the judicial authorities even distinguished between Walloons and Flemings. It is clear that the nature of the crime and social criteria were far more important in the sentencing of Belgian offenders than any alleged racial distinctions between Flemings and Walloons.

Interactions between foreign workers and ordinary Germans were not necessarily shaped by racial policy. Nazi ideology was not all-pervasive and the Nazi authorities' reach did not extend into the interactions between ordinary Germans and foreigners. The approach adopted by ordinary Germans in their dealings with foreigners was shaped by a complex range of factors including Nazi racial policies, past military conflicts, racial stereotyping, and personal experiences, and in some cases genuine compassion. Fear of how their behaviour might be perceived by the Nazi authorities also influenced the behaviour of ordinary German: some Berliners avoided close contact with foreigners, while others had good relations with foreign colleagues and assisted them in whatever ways they could despite the risks. The accounts of Belgian workers also illustrate how encounters between Germans and foreigners could also erode racial stereotypes and dispel preconceptions about foreigners. The attitudes of Germans towards their foreign counterparts underwent a sea change, and in many cases friendships and relationships developed between Germans and foreign workers.

CHAPTER FIVE:
Belgian workers in Düsseldorf

At the outbreak of the Second World War the west German city of Düsseldorf was a key industrial and trade city at the heart of the predominantly Catholic Rhine-Ruhr region.[1] Düsseldorf was one of the largest cities in the region with a population of 516,000 in 1937,[2] while neighbouring Cologne was the fourth largest city in the Reich with a population of 769,300.[3] Düsseldorf served as the gateway to Germany's Ruhr region – the most important industrial area of Germany from the nineteenth century onward. A wide-ranging industrial sector developed in Düsseldorf, in part around the processing of products from the Ruhr and Wupper regions, including iron foundries, glass, leather, machinery and locomotive manufacturing, brewing, and the steel, textile and chemical industries. The city was home to major armaments factories such as Rheinmetall-Borsig AG and Mannesmannröhren-Werke AG, as well as industrial concerns such as Vereinigte Stahlwerke AG and chemical manufacturer Henkel & Cie AG. Additionally, there were orchards and vegetable growing on the southern outskirts of the city. Düsseldorf also served as a key transport hub in the Rhine-Ruhr region. The docks to the south west of the city on the banks of the Rhine linked Düsseldorf to harbours in England, northern Europe and Italy, and the city also served as the principal interchange in the Duisburg–Cologne rail line.

Germany's Rhine-Ruhr region was traditionally a region with a high number of immigrants. Economic migration had seen Belgian and Dutch workers, as well as Polish workers, settle in the Rhine-Ruhr region long before the Second World War.[4] Foreign workers were employed in a range of industries prior to the outbreak of the war. The Düsseldorf rail company Rheinische Bahngesellschaft AG, for example,

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[1] Germany's Rhineland was a predominantly Catholic region, while approximately a third of Düsseldorf's population identified as members of the Evangelical Church in the late 1930s. *Meyers Lexikon*, 7th ed., s.v. "Düsseldorf".
[2] *Meyers Lexikon*, 8th ed., s.v. "Düsseldorf".
[3] Ibid., "Köln".
[4] For a study of the history of foreign labour in Germany see Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labour in Germany*.; and Klaus J Bade, *Migration in European history, The making of Europe*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

had employed workers from neighbouring countries to the west as conductors and train drivers from the 1920s.[5] In the wider Rhine-Ruhr region foreign workers from neighbouring western European countries and Russian Poland had been drawn to jobs in the Ruhr coalmines and industry. Foreign labour had also been used in brick-making and construction. The employment patterns of Belgians working in the Rhine-Ruhr region varied a great deal. In areas close to the border like Aachen so-called "*Grenzgänger*", or workers from border regions, crossed the border to travel to work in Germany each day.[6] While some Belgians went to Germany for a limited period of time in order to support their families with the intention of returning home after they had earned enough money, others had settled in the Rhine-Ruhr on a more permanent basis and some Belgian families had been based in Germany for a number of years. The 1911 annual report for the Office for Industrial Inspection in the south German region of Baden made the following observations regarding the employment patterns of foreign workers:

> Generally speaking, they do not seek permanent employment in German industry. Rather, it is their intention to spend only a limited number of years among us, saving their earnings in order to return to their homeland, there to utilise their extra savings (if these were not already expended to support their families back home) to embark upon some new venture... At certain intervals during the year, usually in the winter, the emigrants return home on a visit. They therefore prefer to be employed in branches dependent on the weather, such as construction, stone quarries, or brick manufacture. They often arrange a work contract for the duration of a specified season right from the start.[7]

The return of foreign workers to their homelands during the winter months was in keeping with the economic interests of employers and the objectives of the German authorities who wished to ensure that foreign workers did not settle in Germany permanently.[8] The return of foreign workers during the winter months also helped reduce unemployment in seasonal industries. Flexible employment was an important factor for many foreign workers who went to Germany on a temporary basis. Greater restrictions on the movement after the outbreak of the Second World War became a source of friction between foreign workers and the Nazi authorities who sought to

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[5] Reinhard Manter, "Zwangsarbeit bei der Rheinischen Bahngesellschaft AG zwischen 1940 und 1945," in *Zwangsarbeit in Düsseldorf*, 381.

[6] Nazi labour administrators noted "*Grenzgänger*" in the employment books of Belgian and Dutch workers who travelled back and forth to Germany for work.

[7] Quoted in Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labour in Germany*, 57.

[8] The Prussian authorities introduced the seasonal closure period in 1891 obliging foreigners to return to their native country in the winter months. This policy was intended to prevent workers settling in Germany more permanently.

break traditional employment patterns. There was a gradual increase in the number of Belgians working in Germany during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century (see Table 9). The statistics on the number of foreign workers employed in Germany in 1907 indicate that 6,627 Belgians were employed in industry in the Rhine Province and Westphalia, and a further 687 Belgians were working in agriculture.[9] These statistics show that roughly half of the Belgians working in Germany in the early twentieth century were employed in industry in the Rhine Province and Westphalia.

Table 9: The employment of Belgians in Germany, 1871-1910

1871	*1880*	*1885*	*1890*	*1895*	*1900*	*1905*	*1910*
5,097	4,561	6,638	7,132	8,947	12,122	12,421	13,455

Source: Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labour in Germany*, 20.

1. The Dimensions of the *Ausländereinsatz* in Düsseldorf

The outbreak of the Second World War did not bring an immediate expansion in the deployment of foreign workers in the Rhine-Ruhr. A representative of the German coalmining industry who visited Belgium in the first months of the German occupation suggested that there was little to be gained from transferring workers to Germany: "It would... be inadvisable to bring large numbers of miners from the Compiègne or Liège area to the Ruhr".[10] High-level Nazi officials in the Rhineland and Westphalia were also opposed to the deployment of foreign workers on a large scale, as they wished to prevent a "second invasion of foreigners" in the region, which traditionally hosted a high number of immigrants.[11] Since the arrival of large numbers of Poles in the second half of the nineteenth century there had been fears of imminent Polonisation in the region.[12] The first foreigners to arrive in Düsseldorf after the outbreak of the Second World War were Polish POWs who arrived in the autumn of 1939, while the second group of foreigners to arrive in the city in the

[9] Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labour in Germany*, 54.
[10] "Reisebericht für Bergswerksdirektor Dr Knepper Gelsenkirchner Bergwerks AG", in "Reisen im besetzten Holland, Belgien und Nordfrankreich btr. Montanindustrie 1938-1941" [travel report dated 22.07.1940 written by a member of industry delegation that inspected industrial concerns in Belgium, the Netherlands and northern France] quoted in Watts, "'Just like free labourers, but under police supervision", 113.
[11] Lotfi, *KZ der Gestapo*, 82.
[12] In 1910 Poles represented 36.7 percent of the entire workforce in the *Oberbergamtbezirk* Dortmund, while during the same time period Poles represented 40 percent of the residents in Gelsenkirchen-Horst, 35 percent in Bottrop and 23 percent in Recklinghausen. Ibid., 341.

spring of 1940 were from neighbouring countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as Italy. A total of 6,274 foreign civilian workers were registered with the labour office in Düsseldorf in January 1941; however, by January 1942 this number had risen to 9,618. In September 1941 Belgian workers – mostly from Flanders – represented the largest contingent of civilian workers from western Europe employed in the Reich.[13] There was no large-scale deployment of foreign workers in Düsseldorf until 1942. By the autumn of 1944 there were around 35,000 foreign civilians living in Düsseldorf, as well as a few thousand POWs and concentration camp inmates – a figure that equated to roughly 10 percent of the city's total pre-war population.[14] This is, however, a much smaller number when compared to Berlin where there were approximately 400,000 foreign workers in late 1944[15] and foreign workers represented 10-17 percent of the population in some parts of the city by the end of the war.[16] The lower proportion of foreign workers in Düsseldorf probably enabled the local authorities to keep foreigners under greater control, compared with cities where they were deployed on a wider scale. We will see that there were key differences in how employers, labour administrators and the security services handled foreign workers in Düsseldorf compared to Berlin.

The demands of war industry ensured that Belgian workers were concentrated in industries critical to the war effort. In Düsseldorf, the goods produced by Persil Henkel & Cie GmbH, chemical manufacturer and producer of the first self-acting washing powder, were not regarded as critical to the war industry and the company therefore struggled to maintain its workforce. The number of foreign civilians employed in the company's plant in Düsseldorf-Holthausen reached its highpoint in 1943 when 13.3 percent of the company's workers were foreign civilians. By contrast, labour shortages caused by the rearmament program prompted Mannesmann to begin recruiting foreign civilian workers as early as 1938. By 1943 29.2 percent of the employees at company's plant in Düsseldorf-Reisholz were foreign civilians.[17] Manufacturer of cannons, engine parts for aeroplanes, propellers

[13] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 98.
[14] Rafael R Leissa and Joachim Schröder, "Zwangsarbeit in Düsseldorf: Struktur, Organisation und Alltag im Arbeitseinsatz von Ausländern im nationalsozialistischen Düsseldorf," in *Zwangsarbeit in Düsseldorf*, 26.
[15] Layer-Jung, "Überwachung und Bestrafung," 85.
[16] Cord Pagenstecher, "Lagerlisten und Erinnerungsberichte", 104.
[17] Horst A Wessel, "Ausländische Mitarbeiter in den Mannesmann-Betrieben," in *Zwangsarbeit in Düsseldorf*, 431.

and anti-magnetic heads and tubes for missiles, Rheinmetall-Borsig employed a total of 14,839 workers in its plants in Düsseldorf-Rath and Düsseldorf-Derendorf in 1939.[18] The number of foreign workers employed by the company rapidly expanded from 1.8 percent of all employees in 1941 to 24.72 percent of all employees in 1942, 22.99 percent of employees in 1943[19] and to 29.1 percent of employees in 1944.[20] While no specific statistics are available in relation to the composition of Düsseldorf's foreign population itself, the statistics for the Rhineland regional labour office provide a useful indication. At the beginning of 1942 Dutch and Belgian workers represented 29.5 percent and 12.6 percent of the foreigner population respectively in the Rhineland, while Polish workers represented 28.8 percent.[21] French workers were, on the other hand, underrepresented in the Ruhr when compared to other parts of Germany.[22]

By contrast with the Polish civilian workers, most of whom were conscripts, the overwhelming majority of workers from western and southern Europe amongst the first waves of foreign workers deployed in Düsseldorf were volunteers. This pattern did, however, change after the introduction of conscription in occupied countries, including the Netherlands and Belgium.[23] A similar pattern can be observed in Aachen. The construction firm Derichs & Konertz employed a substantial number of workers from the annexed region in eastern Belgium. In the first two years of the war almost all Belgians employed by the company were "*Grenzgänger*" – a practice that continued until the end of the occupation. The introduction of conscription in the Netherlands and Belgium brought an influx of new workers, resulting in a drop in the proportion of German workers employed by the firm from 37 percent in 1942 to 22 percent in 1943. During the same time period, the proportion of Belgians employed by the company rose from 9 percent to 16 percent – largely due to the conscription of workers for Organisation Todt.[24] OT was a civil and military engineering group that was responsible for engineering projects

[18] Christian Leitzbach, "Der Einsatz ausländischer Arbeiterinnen und Arbeiter bei Rheinmetall-Borsig während des Zweiten Weltkriegses," in ibid., 405.
[19] Leissa and Schröder, "Zwangsarbeit in Düsseldorf: Struktur, Organisation und Alltag," 96.
[20] Leitzbach, "Der Einsatz ausländischer Arbeiterinnen und Arbeiter bei Rheinmetall-Borsig während des Zweiten Weltkriegses," 406.
[21] Leissa and Schröder, "Zwangsarbeit in Düsseldorf: Struktur, Organisation und Alltag," 96.
[22] Patrice Arnaud, *Les STO: Histoire des Français requis en Allemagne nazie* (CNRS, 2010), 46.
[23] Leissa and Schröder, "Zwangsarbeit in Düsseldorf: Struktur, Organisation und Alltag," 26.
[24] Marc Engels et al., *Zwangsarbeit in der Stadt Aachen: Ausländereinsatz in einer westdeutschen Grenzstadt während des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (Aachen: Mayer, 2002), 66-7.

within the Reich and the occupied territories. OT had 780,000 employees in September 1944 and its ranks burgeoned to 1.4 million by November 1944 following the withdrawal from occupied territories and the large scale round up of workers by the retreating military. Foreign nationals from occupied territories represented 80 percent of the workers employed by OT, and included foreign volunteers, conscripted workers, military internees and concentration camp inmates.[25] OT employees were also deployed extensively in Düsseldorf, completing urgent construction and repair work in the wake of bombing raids.

2. Demographic profile of Belgians working in Düsseldorf

After the war BLO Lieutenant Leonard de Maen compiled a list of 5,633 Belgians who were resident in Düsseldorf between 1939 and 1945, using information extracted from the city's population register. This list is a key source of information and provides a basis to analyse the demographic profile of the Belgians who were deployed in the city during the Second World War.[26] While this list records how many Belgians lived in the city during the war years, as well as data such as their date and place of birth and marital status in the case of women, it provides no information about the time of their arrival and departure or whether these Belgians had been working in Düsseldorf prior to the outbreak of the war.[27] A sample of 2,371 Belgians from this list has been used to analyse the demographic profile of the Belgians who lived in the city during the war, deepening understanding of those who went to Germany and the patterns of their employment. The sample includes a total of 344 women and 1,909 men.[28] The sample indicates that men represented 84.7 percent of the city's Belgian population, while women represented 15.3 percent – a figure that is slightly higher than the national average. In the case of women it is also possible to examine marital status, as officials recorded both maiden and married names. A total of 202 or 58.72 percent of the women in the sample were married. Many of these women probably accompanied their husbands or other relatives or joined those who were already working in Düsseldorf. This is significant because

[25] Leissa and Schröder, "Zwangsarbeit in Düsseldorf: Struktur, Organisation und Alltag," 89.
[26] SVG/DO, R.451/Tr.24.324, List of Belgians resident in the *Stadtkreis* (city district) Düsseldorf 1939-1945.
[27] Nationality was determined by the nationality of one's father, thus Belgian nationality was conferred upon those born in Germany to Belgian fathers.
[28] A total of 2,253 records have been used to analyse the gender breakdown of Belgians who were resident in the city, as in a small number of cases it is not possible to distinguish the gender of a resident.

married women were not liable for labour conscription and thus the high number of married women points to the conclusion that a high proportion of the Belgian women deployed in Düsseldorf were volunteers.

Analysis by year of birth also provides valuable insights into the characteristics of Belgians who worked in Düsseldorf (see Figure 19 on page 242. There is a wide distribution in the years of birth, showing that Belgian men and women of almost all ages were resident in Düsseldorf during the war. Looking firstly at the women's years of birth, the majority were born in the years 1918–1925 and many were probably in their late teens or early twenties at the time of their departure for Germany. However, a number of older women also figure amongst the Belgian women who lived in Düsseldorf during the war. Looking at the cohort as a whole, the women's median year of birth was 1918, indicating that median age at the time of their arrival in Germany was probably twenty-four. The median year of birth amongst Belgian men deployed in Düsseldorf was 1913 indicating that Belgian men were older when they departed for Germany.[29] Given that male departures peaked in 1941, it is likely that the median age of the men departing for Germany for the first time was twenty-eight. Following a similar pattern to the women deployed in Düsseldorf, the highest numbers of men were born in the years 1920–1924. Patrice Arnaud's study of French workers in Germany also shows that French voluntary departures follow a similar pattern, with the median age of twenty-seven amongst women and thirty-three amongst men.[30] Residence records also indicate that, in addition to the working-age Belgians who were resident in Düsseldorf during the war years, a number of Belgian children were resident in the city. Most of the young Belgians born in the years 1930-1939 living in Düsseldorf during the Second World War were born in Germany, indicating that they were probably living in Germany prior to the outbreak of war, whereas most of those who were born in the years 1928-1929 had been born in Belgium. This group was of working-age and probably working in Germany. Some younger workers accompanied parents or other relatives who were working in Germany, while Belgian teenagers as young as fourteen also went to Germany unaccompanied.

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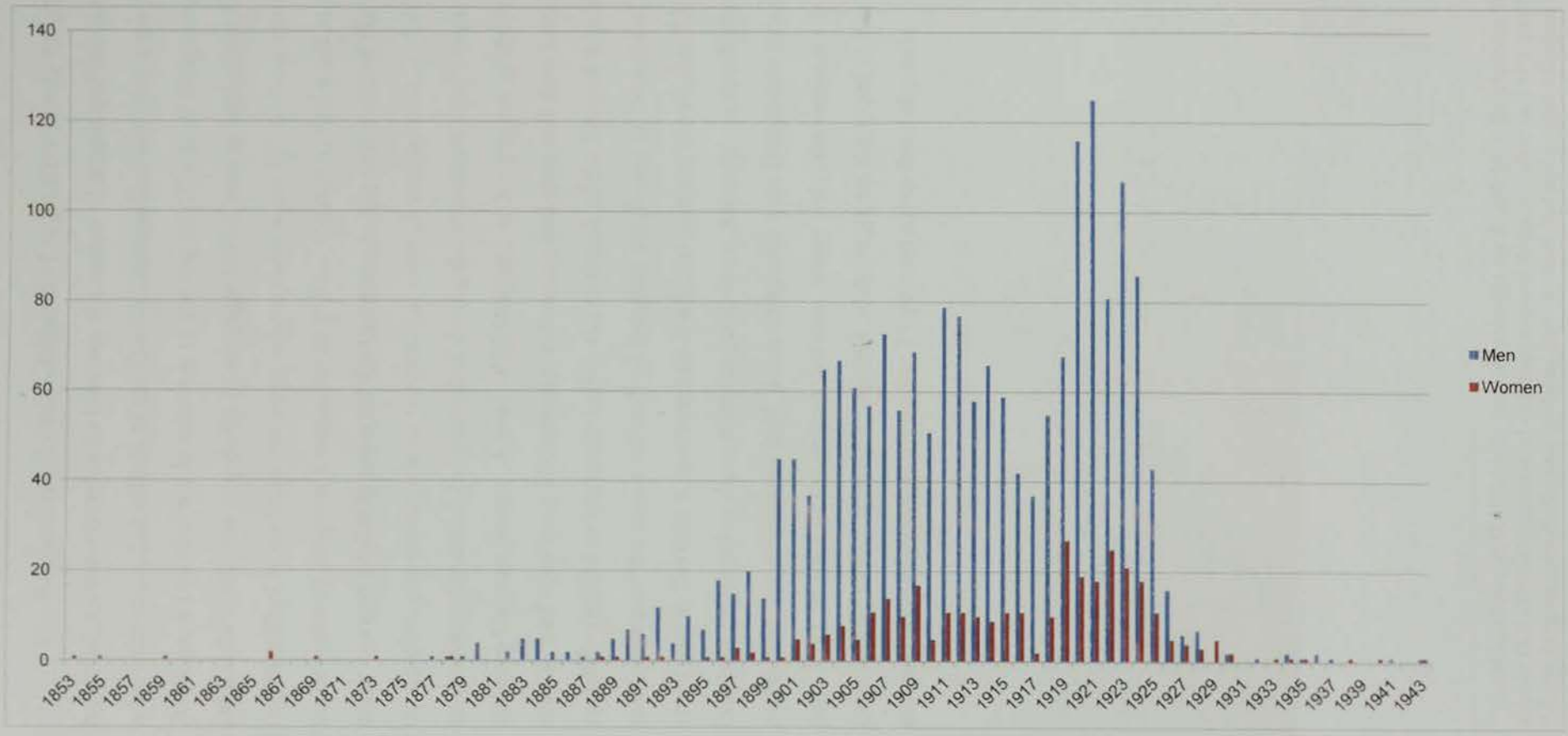
[29] These conclusions are based on the analysis of the year of the first departure for Germany of those in the sample of eighty-nine. The analysis of the sample shows that the men and women's departures peaked in 1941 and 1942 respectively.

[30] Arnaud, *Les STO: Histoire des Français requis en Allemagne nazie*, 5.

Figure 19: Year of Birth of Belgians Living in Düsseldorf, 1940-1945

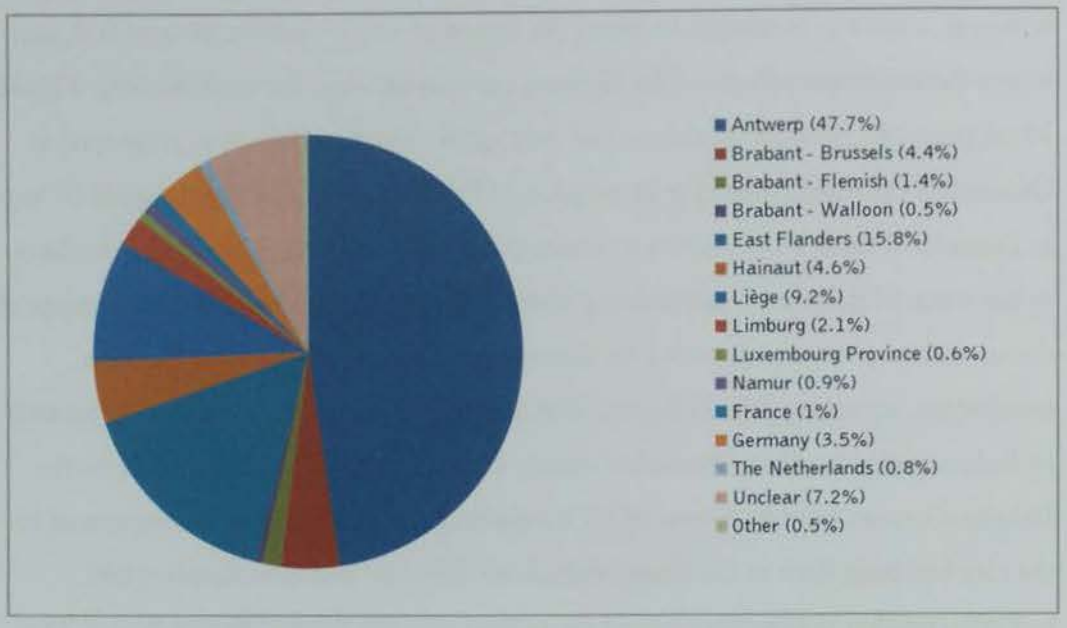


Source: Author's statistics based on the list of Belgians resident in the *Stadtkreis* Düsseldorf in the period 1939-1945: SVG/DO, R.451/Tr.24.324

The Belgians employed in Düsseldorf came from across Belgium. There is, however, a strong correlation between the region of origin and the parts of Belgium where the economic effects of the German occupation were felt most acutely. Figure 20 on page 244 shows a breakdown of the region of birth of Belgians employed in Düsseldorf (also see Appendix 21 on page 357). Close to half of the Belgians living in Düsseldorf came from Antwerp, where there were 122,630 unemployed workers in the wake of Belgium's surrender in 1940.[31] Unable to find work at home, many of these workers probably departed for Germany in the first years of the German occupation, accepting jobs in regions that were closer to home. A further 10 percent of Belgians registered in Düsseldorf during the war came from Liège, close to the Belgian-German border. A total of 83 Belgians or 3.5 percent of those registered in the city had been born in Germany, indicating that they and their families had probably resided in Germany before the outbreak of the Second World War.[32] The comparison of the region of birth of Belgians employed in Düsseldorf with those employed in Berlin's Kreuzberg and Neukölln districts shows that 23 percent of the Belgians deployed in these districts came from Antwerp – a much smaller proportion, approximately half, when compared with Düsseldorf (see Figure 7 on page 182). In spite of the greater distance, many Belgians deployed in Berlin came from further afield. Almost 22 percent of the workers deployed in Berlin came from east and west Flanders and a further 13 percent came from Brussels.

[31] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, Nr.8, Anlage 5. Article from the *Brüsseler Zeitung* (3.9.1940). [Figures based on unemployment levels recorded on 13.07.1940].
[32] Some of these individuals were probably German-born and had acquired Belgian nationality through marriage.

Figure 20: Belgians working in Düsseldorf by region of birth, 1939-1945



Source: Author's statistics based on the list of Belgians resident in the *Stadtkreis* Düsseldorf in the period 1939-1945: SVG/DO, R.451/Tr.24.324.

3. Employment patterns of Belgians deployed in Düsseldorf

Detailed research into the Belgians deployed in Düsseldorf has led to the conclusion that a high proportion of those working in the city were volunteers. The first indications pointing to this conclusion came from responses to the *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*. A survey of hundreds of responses to identify questionnaires submitted by Belgians who had been deployed in Düsseldorf, including the responses returned by Belgians from the regions of Antwerp and Liège where large numbers of those who were deployed in Düsseldorf were recruited, produced a total of just four responses. The conclusion that most Belgians deployed in the city were volunteers was further reinforced by the first random sample of approximately thirty personal files of Belgians who had lived in Düsseldorf during the war requested from the SVG/DO. Amongst the first sample of personal files requested just one individual had sought formal recognition as a labour deportee, and subsequent requests for the individual files of Belgians who worked in Düsseldorf produced similar results. Amongst a sample of eighty-nine Belgian men and women who worked in Düsseldorf during the war just six had sought formal recognition as labour deportees from the Belgian state after the war; all of these applications were rejected on the basis that the workers went to Germany voluntarily. One other Belgian who had worked in Düsseldorf sought recognition under the Statute for Labour Draft Evaders claiming that he had been forced to go into hiding in order to avoid returning to

Germany after he returned home due to illness in 1944. The Belgian authorities rejected the application on the basis that there was no evidence that the applicant had been forced to go to Germany.

Using the individual files of these eighty-nine Belgians who worked in Düsseldorf between 1940 and 1945, analysis has been undertaken into the circumstances of each individual's departure/s for Germany and each worker has been categorised on the basis of the available information. The Belgian postwar authorities applied stringent criteria when assessing Statute applications, and a previous voluntary departure usually dictated that the applicant would not be recognised as a labour deportee, irrespective of the circumstances of any subsequent departures. In this respect the criteria applied by the Belgian authorities to assess Statute applications can be regarded as punitive: punishing those who departed voluntarily – an act that was regarded as collaboration. Less stringent criteria have been applied here to evaluate the circumstances of a worker's departure for Germany. The signing of an employment contract, for example, is not taken as confirmation that a worker went to Germany voluntarily, as conscripted workers were pressured to sign contracts or forfeit the much needed 750bfrs payment. Table 10 on page 246 shows a breakdown of the categories into which the individuals in the sample fell. A total of seventy-four workers can be categorised as volunteers, while five can be categorised as conscripted workers. The records indicate that a further two workers had worked in Germany on a voluntary basis initially and were subsequently forced to return. Seven of the eight women in the sample were volunteers, and all but one had gone to Germany prior to the introduction of conscription. None of the women sought official recognition as labour deportees. In view of the fact that Belgian labour recruits probably had limited influence over where labour offices sent them to work in Germany, it is apparent that labour administrators employed a policy of sending volunteers to Düsseldorf. The most obvious explanation for this apparent unwritten policy is the city's proximity to the Belgian-German border and the concern that conscripts deployed in Düsseldorf would be tempted to breach their labour contracts and attempt to make their way home illegally. Perhaps officials also regarded deployment in regions close to the German-Belgian border as a privilege to be afforded to those who agreed to depart voluntarily? Düsseldorf and other west German cities were probably also a preferred destination for Belgian volunteers, as they could visit home more easily.

Table 10: Categorisation of Belgians deployed in Düsseldorf based on a sample of eighty-nine files

Category	*Men*	*Percentage*	*Women*	*Percentage*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Conscript	5	6.17	0	0	5	5.62
Economic migrant (living in Germany before 1940)	1	1.23	1	12.5	2	2.25
Political prisoner	1	1.23	0	0	1	1.12
Volunteer	67	82.72	7	87.5	74	83.15
Volunteer/conscript	2	2.47	0	0	2	2.25
Unclear	5	6.17	0	0	5	5.62
Total	81		8		89	

Source: Author's statistics based on research into individual files from SVG/DO.

The year workers commenced their first labour assignment in Germany also offers useful insights into the wartime employment patterns of Belgians who worked in Düsseldorf. Table 11 on page 247 shows the year of those in the sample took up their first labour assignment in Germany. It is clear that the majority of the Belgians deployed in the city departed for Germany in 1941/1942 – most before the introduction of labour conscription in October 1942. While the greatest number of men commenced their first labour assignment in Germany in 1941, the women tended to commence employment in Germany later with their arrivals peaking in 1942 (see Figure 21 on page 247). Many of the Belgian workers who arrived in Düsseldorf had previously undertaken a labour assignment in another part of Germany. The statistics in relation to the year of first departure clearly support the conclusion that many of the Belgians deployed in Düsseldorf were volunteers. This conclusion has significant implications for this study. Statute applications and the *Enquête Travail Obligatoire* survey are the principal sources providing primary source accounts' information about the circumstances of a worker's departure and their experiences in Germany. Thus the virtual absence of *Statut Déporté* files and survey responses means that there are almost no primary accounts provided by Belgians who worked in Düsseldorf and their stories must be reconstructed impressionistically using official documents. In view of the lack of first-hand accounts from Belgians deployed in Düsseldorf, the *Gestapo* files from the Düsseldorf regional headquarters are an invaluable historical source.

Table 11: Year of first labour assignment in Germany			
Year	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
1940	9	0	9
1941	34	1	35
1942	16	5	21
1943	11	1	12
1944	3	0	3
1945	0	0	0

Source: Author's statistics based on research of individual files from SVG/DO.

Figure 21: Year of first labour assignment in Germany

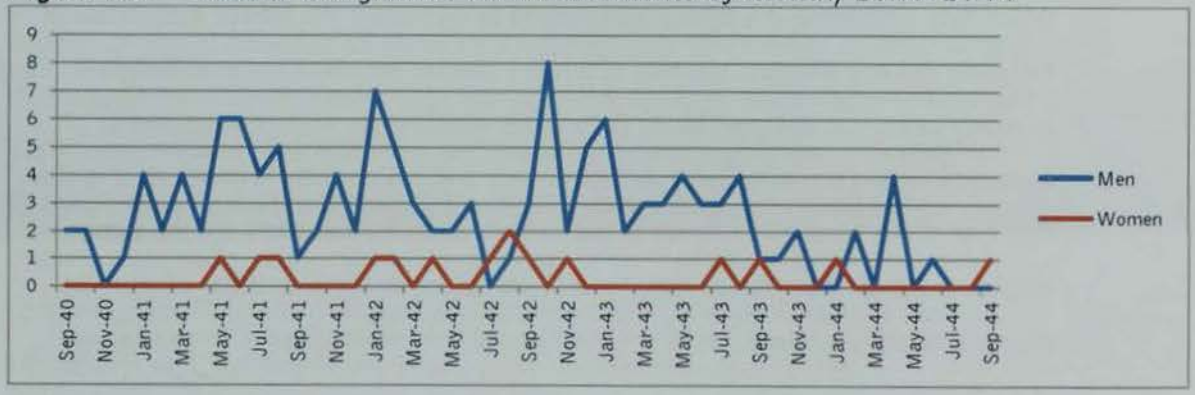
Turning to the question of whether Belgians who worked in Düsseldorf took up labour assignments of limited duration or remained in Germany for the duration of the war, it is clear that many of the Belgian volunteers worked in Germany for most of the war years. While each worker's transfer papers provide an indication of when they commenced a labour assignment in Germany, the labour authorities in Belgium did not maintain records of when a worker returned home to Belgium. Thus in many cases it is not possible to determine whether the worker remained in Germany or had travelled back and forth over a given period.[33] However, it is clear that few of the workers included in the sample continued to work for the same employer for the duration of their time in Germany. A small number of workers changed employer when they were re-assigned to new employers by the labour

[33] Where this information is available it is usually found in the medical records maintained by the doctors engaged by the Military Administration in cases where a worker returned home due to illness and the labour authorities were monitoring their health for the purpose of sending them back to Germany. Other indications are provided by correspondence between German employers and labour administrators in Belgium in cases where a worker breached their labour contract.

office; however, more typically workers returned home when a labour assignment came to an end and visited the local labour recruitment office in Belgium when they were ready to resume employment in Germany. Instead of resuming work with their old employer, returning workers were generally assigned a job with a new employer, often in another part Germany. Thus it is clear that loyalty to one's employer probably played little role in shaping the employment patterns of Belgians volunteers.

Aside from providing breaks from work in Germany at regular intervals, returning home at the end of a labour assignment also enabled workers to seek a better job with a new employer or perhaps seek to join friends or family members who were working in another part of Germany. Forty-two of the workers included in the sample – close to half – worked in more than one part of Germany during the war. Most of this group worked in two different regions, although some Belgians undertook as many as four or five labour assignments in different parts of Germany over the war. Some spent periods working in Germany that were interspersed with periods working in Belgium. Figure 22 shows the month of commencement of labour assignments in Germany.[34] Recruitment numbers fluctuated significantly over the course of the occupation. It is notable that many workers commenced new labour assignments in January following the Christmas period. Recruitment officials noted a drop in recruitment numbers in December because workers did not wish to leave their families shortly before the festive season.[35] In this respect their employment patterns are not dissimilar to those of Belgians who worked in Germany from the late nineteenth century.

Figure 22: Labour assignment commencements by month, 1940-1944



Source: Author's statistics based on research of individual files from SVG/DO.

[34] All labour assignments commencements, including those in other parts of the Reich, are taken into consideration.
[35] CEGES/SOMA, BAL13.1/9-11, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, Nr.13, Anlage 3, 1.

The employment records of Belgian volunteers who departed during the first years of the occupation also illustrate that some German employers were flexible with their foreign employees. The Nazis introduced a ban on weekend trips after the outbreak of war in 1939, provoking anger from foreign workers. A report from the Security Service in November 1939 observed that foreign workers objected to these restrictions on the grounds that such a ban had not been applied to Germans, and that they had concluded private contracts with their employer that could not be altered without their agreement.[36] A closer examination of the leave granted to Belgian workers indicates that German employers did not always apply Nazi regulations. Belgian couple Louis G and Hélène R from Liège commenced employment with the firm Mannesmann in Düsseldorf in January 1941 and May 1941 respectively. In the seven-month period from January to July 1941 Louis G was granted twenty-five days leave, visiting his family in Belgium regularly. After Hélène R joined Louis G in Germany the couple were granted leave simultaneously allowing them to return to Liège together. Workers who came from eastern regions of Belgium could take the opportunity to visit home for short periods of perhaps two to three days. Regular leave in Belgium also allowed workers to obtain goods such as food and clothing that were not available in Germany. Louis G and Hélène R were employed in Germany on a voluntary basis and their employer's willingness to grant regular leave periods allowing them to return home to Liège was probably a key factor in their decision to continue working in Germany.[37] In many respects the flexible arrangements between German employers and Belgian volunteers, especially in the first years of the German occupation, represents a continuation of earlier employment trends, with German employers and Belgian employees coming to mutually acceptable arrangements regarding leave – in spite of the regulations introduced by Nazi officials.

Following the same pattern as Belgian volunteers during the First World War, Belgian volunteers accepted employment in Nazi Germany provided that the living and working conditions in Germany were satisfactory. Young worker Marcel M gave up his job in the textile industry in Kortrijk to pursue better job prospects in Germany, later telling *Gestapo* officials that he volunteered for work in Germany because his wages were low and there was very little food in Belgium. In May 1941

[36] Boberach, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, vol. 6, 465., Nr.16 (15.11.1939)
[37] Belgian couple came to the attention of the *Gestapo* in July 1941 when they were denounced by another Belgian who wished to cause trouble for the couple. HStAD, RW58/19.534.

Marcel M commenced work at the Rheinischen Kunstseide textile factory in Krefeld. However, in June 1941, just weeks after commencing employment in Germany, Marcel M and a group of fellow Belgians left their workplace and tried to return home. The men were arrested in Eupen, the German-speaking region of Belgium that had been incorporated into the Reich after 1918, and were detained by police for two days until they were returned to their employer. Marcel M explained in a letter to his family that was picked up by the postal censor, "I must advise that we want to escape because we can't bear it in the factory anymore. In recent days there has been almost no food and [we have had] such heavy work". When questioned about his letter he told the *Gestapo* interrogators:

> If I wrote about poor food and heavy labour in my letter, I still stand by the content of the letter today. Such is the mood amongst foreign workers. I must say, however, that I am much more satisfied of late because I am earning substantially more money and the food at the Rheinischen Kunstseide has also improved.[38]

Volunteers who felt that their employer had failed to keep the promises that were made with respect to wages and living conditions in Germany, and was exploiting them, quickly sought to end their labour assignment – often by any means. However, Marcel M did not begrudge his employer and once his wages and food provisions improved he was content to continue working for him. Belgian volunteer Madeleine D was employed as kitchen-hand at the Hotel Graf Adolf hospice in Düsseldorf. In August 1942 Madeleine D and her French colleague, Marie B, received an official warning from *Gestapo* officials due to their defiant and undisciplined behaviour. Madeleine D's German supervisor had asked that she work late and Madeleine D refused on the basis that the tasks that were given to her had been assigned to another employee. Refusing to work overtime, Madeleine D sought to defend her right to work her rostered hours and leave at the end of her shift. Despite a warning from *Gestapo* officials that her indiscipline could bring more serious consequences, including transfer to a concentration camp, Madeleine D continued to defy her employer, overstaying when her employer granted her leave to return Belgium when her child was sick and failing to return when a second period of leave was granted.[39]

A group of twelve Belgian women commenced employment at the Gerresheimer Glashüttewerke (glass works) in Düsseldorf in July 1941. Although the women went to Germany voluntarily, they rebelled against their employer just a

[38] Ibid., RW58/27.133.
[39] Ibid., RW58/48.489

couple of weeks after their arrival. The women refused to go to work for a whole day and were also heard singing "Deutschland, Deutschland unter alles". Company officials reported the women to the *Gestapo*, requesting that action be taken. Company officials identified Gabrielle T as the ringleader and sought permission to send her back to Belgium. When *Gestapo* officers gave the women an official warning about the consequences of their behaviour, Gabrielle T acted as the group's spokesperson, continuing in her recalcitrant stance. Fearing that Gabrielle T would continue to be a negative influence upon her colleagues, *Gestapo* officials agreed that Gabrielle T was unsuitable for deployment in Germany and arranged with the labour office for her to be sent back to Belgium, after spending twenty-one days in custody as punishment.[40] While male workers who refused to work were often transferred to an AEL to punish them and teach them a lesson, *Gestapo* officials did not consider sending Gabrielle T or her Belgian co-workers to an AEL. This clearly demonstrates that *Gestapo* officials in Düsseldorf were reluctant to take the step of sending western European women to an AEL – a step officials did not hesitate to take in the case of recalcitrant male workers. There is no indication as to why the women rebelled against their employer, but it is highly likely that they were dissatisfied with their living and working conditions. Gabrielle T's continued defiance, even in the face a warning from *Gestapo* officers, indicates that it was probably her intent to be such a thorn in the side of her employer that the company would acquiesce and allow her to return home. The approach adopted by Belgian volunteers was underpinned by the notion that the relationship between employers and employees was a two-way street and both parties were required to abide by their end of the bargain. Belgians expected that normative employment rights would be upheld, including the right to strike.

4. Accommodation

Foreign workers' camps were established across Düsseldorf and were concentrated near places of work in the more industrial parts of the city. Klaudia Wehofen has documented over 400 camps in Düsseldorf.[41] Often little is known about camps other than their location. A closer examination of the camps with greater than 500 residents reveals many of these larger camps fell into the category of POW camp.

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[40] Ibid., RW58/51.176.

[41] Klaudia Wehofen, "Nachweis der Lager, Haftstätten und Wohnplätze ausländischer Arbeiterinnen und Arbeiter in Düsseldorf," in *Zwangsarbeit in Düsseldorf*, 543-633.

Other large camps included camps for workers employed by Organisation Todt and satellite camps for the Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald concentration camps. Several of the larger camps were also designated as *Ostarbeiter* camps. It is therefore apparent that western European civilian workers were less likely to be housed in large complexes. The records indicate that there was a large number of smaller camps with fewer than 100 residents, as well as many camps with between 100 and 500 residents in Düsseldorf. Comparing the size of camps in Berlin and Düsseldorf, it is clear that camps in Düsseldorf were generally smaller in size. While a number of massive camp complexes housing around 2,500 residents were established in Berlin, the camps established in Düsseldorf for western European civilian workers were generally smaller.

A sample of 2,452 records taken from BLO de Maen's list of Belgians who were resident in Düsseldorf during the Second World War has been used to analyse the accommodation of Belgian residents.[42] De Maen's list provides only the last recorded address where a Belgian resided, and previous addresses were not recorded in cases where a resident had lived in multiple locations during the war. Closer analysis and cross-referencing reveals that many Belgians lived at addresses where there are no records to indicate the existence of a camp during the war, suggesting many Belgians lived in private accommodation. This conclusion is supported by the fact that some employers housed a significant proportion of their workers outside camps in private accommodation. These workers were probably housed in private accommodation either as a lodger or in a rented room. The Klöckner-Werk AG employed around 500 foreign workers. Only some of the company's employees (most likely POWs) were accommodated at the Lager "Otto" at Fichtenstrasse 36-38 in Flingern Süd, while another 120 employees lived in private accommodation.[43] This example illustrates that some employers elected to house a significant proportion of employees outside camps. A similar pattern can be observed in other Rhine-Ruhr cities. According to a Security Service report from March 1943 a quarter of Essen's foreign workers were living in private accommodation.[44] Many medium-sized enterprises preferred to house their workers in private accommodation in order to avoid the expense of building barracks.[45] Private accommodation was often also

[42] SVG/DO, R.451/Tr.24324, List of Belgians resident in Düsseldorf 1939-1945.
[43] Wehofen, "Nachweis der Lager, Haftstätten und Wohnplätze," 556.
[44] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 106.
[45] Leissa and Schröder, "Die Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen der ausländischen Arbeitskräfte in Düsseldorf," in *Zwangsarbeit in Düsseldorf*, 166.

an easier solution to the problem of housing foreign workers because shortages of manpower and building materials made it difficult to establish camps. At the camp run by Düsseldorf's Firma Theodor Kiepe Elektrotechnische Fabrik, for example, "Belgian workers were only housed temporarily until they could be housed in private quarters". By contrast Russian and Ukrainian workers employed by the company were lodged in two stone barracks next to the factory grounds.[46] Racial policy ensured priority was given to housing *Ostarbeiter* in camps in cases where companies had limited capacity to house foreign workers in company accommodation. Many Belgian workers, especially those who were employed by smaller companies, therefore enjoyed a privileged position with respect to the allocation of housing. With few exceptions, the privilege of private accommodation was limited to western Europeans who were not subject to a strict surveillance regime. Heinrich Bangert, the DAF Regional Chief for Düsseldorf, advised on 16 December 1942, "Residence in private lodgings... is always the reward for particular industriousness, diligence, discipline, loyalty and character".[47] Through the introduction of a permit system for workers who wished to live outside camps officials sought to vet workers to ensure they were politically reliable and to enforce Nazi racial policies.

Married couples and families who went to Germany together invariably represented an administrative problem for German officials, as they quite naturally wished to find accommodation together. The official policy on the accommodation of foreign workers stipulated that the sexes should be housed separately in camp accommodation, and this would therefore apparently preclude the option of couples or families living together. According to the records of steel manufacturer Hille & Müller GmbH, two couples worked for the company and were accommodated at the company work home for civilian workers at Am Trippelsberg 48, Düsseldorf-Reisholz. In both cases, the husband commenced work in Germany and was later joined by his wife. Franz W took up a position as an unskilled worker with the company in January 1943 and was joined by his wife Louise in July 1943. Her husband's employer assigned Louise W work as a kitchen-hand. The couple initially lived together in the company work home and subsequently secured private lodgings.[48] These cases demonstrate that German employers endeavoured to find

[46] SVG/DO, SDR 300.867 and SDR 302.639.
[47] Leissa and Schröder, "Die Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen der ausländischen Arbeitskräfte", 165.
[48] SVG/DO, SDR 300.867 and SDR 302.639.

work together for couples and for the relatives of existing employees. This case also illustrates that, despite the Nazis' policy of housing men and women separately, in practice some companies housed both male and female workers together. Heusler emphasises that most directives, guidelines and decrees published by central agencies with respect to the requirements for living standards for foreigners were adhered to broadly, but often took into account the limitations due to the wartime conditions. Local authorities, company officials and camp administrators could therefore exercise a significant degree of discretion.[49] Local conditions and the approach of the local authorities led to wide variations in the living conditions – both across Germany and even within the same region or city.

Security at camps in Düsseldorf varied significantly depending on the type and size of camp and the residents' nationality. Smaller camps often had no security in place and residents were free to come and go, whereas surveillance was usually more rigorous in larger camps where curfews were commonly enforced, guard posts erected and regular patrols undertaken. A strict security regime was established at the Rheinmetall-Borsig's civilian workers' camp in Grashofstrasse to the south of the city. The camp grounds were surrounded by a fence, which included a barbed-wire section. Armed members of the company's factory police maintained constant surveillance at the camp. Separate rules applied to western and *Ostarbeiter*: western Europeans were completely free, whereas *Ostarbeiter* were only permitted to leave the camp if they were granted a leave pass. Greater surveillance limited Russian workers' freedom of movement and denied them opportunities to improve their situation.

BLO de Maen conducted a survey in relation to sites in Düsseldorf where camps were believed to have been located during the Second World War. The information provided by the Böhler Werke AG, which ran the "*Am Mühlenweg*" camp for foreign civilian workers in Düsseldorf-Heerdt, offers insights into the differing circumstances of western Europeans compared with their counterparts from the Soviet Union. The camp was divided into two separate sections: the *Ostarbeiterlager "Alte Mühle"* housed an average of 542 *Ostarbeiter* between 1942 and 1945; and the *Westarbeiterlager "Alte Mühle"* housed an average of 241 workers between 1941 and 1945. Company officials noted that "in most respects [the *Westarbeiterlager*] essentially corresponds with *Ostarbeiterlager*". However,

[49] Heusler, *Zwangsarbeit für die Münchner Kriegswirtschaft*, 238.

notable differences in the two camps included the provision of larger green spaces, rockeries, two concrete dance floors and the planting of fir trees in the *Westarbeiterlager*. Thus western European residents enjoyed recreational facilities, as well as more space and aesthetically pleasing features. A nursery for the children of *Ostarbeiter* women was also established at the *Ostarbeiterlager* in September 1943.[50] Such nurseries were notorious places, where children who were regarded as racially worthless died in large numbers due to starvation and infectious disease. The whole camp was surrounded by a wire mesh fence and guard posts that were permanently manned were also established. Housing was a crucial factor in the lives of foreign workers and affected their day-to-day existence in myriad ways. The fact that a significant proportion of Belgian workers lived outside camps or lived in smaller camps where there was less surveillance and more freedom of movement gave them much greater room to manoeuvre.

5. Illness and mortality

The inequalities in the treatment of foreign workers are thrown into sharp relief by the vastly different standards of medical care afforded to foreigners in Düsseldorf. Frank Sparing has emphasised that "a central element of Nazi social policy was the exclusion of entire groups of people on the basis of race. This applied particularly to access to medical treatment".[51] Hospital records indicate that Belgians were admitted to hospitals across the city and were generally afforded a comparatively high standard of care. By contrast, *Ostarbeiter* were, as a general rule, denied hospital treatment. In December 1941 the Reich Labour Minister ordered foreign workers' camps be equipped with sick bays and that *Ostarbeiter* should only be admitted to hospital in exceptional circumstances. However, the Düsseldorf Industrial Inspectorate noted that sick bays and isolation rooms had been established in few camps in March 1944.[52] Shortages of labour and construction materials, and the need to repair and rebuild industrial plants and accommodation that had been destroyed by bombing, meant that other building work took precedence over the construction of health facilities for foreigners. The tragic consequences of this policy are illustrated by the case of two Ukrainian workers suffering from methanol poisoning who were taken to the hospital in Düsseldorf-Heerdt and who were denied admission to

[50] SVG/DO, BUR71, Camps Douteux, Reg. Bez. Düsseldorf, 406, Nr.12. Accompanying information to *Enquête sur les prisons et les camps douteux* (Mod. 96) questionnaire.
[51] Sparing, "Die medizinische Behandlung von Zwangsarbeitern," 266.
[52] Ibid., 277.

hospital in an hour of dire need in February 1944. Hospital officials refused to admit the men because they were Ukrainian and there was no room free, stating that they could not accommodate Ukrainians in beds alongside German patients. One of the two men died a short time later. The second man was finally admitted to the Grafenberg State Mental Hospital and Nursing Home, but also died soon after.[53]

Hospital staff adhered strictly to Nazi racial policies even in life-threatening circumstances with tragic results. Sparing suggests that this refusal to admit the Ukrainian workers to hospital was not an isolated case and by that stage had long been the usual practice in Düsseldorf.[54] The refusal to admit *Ostarbeiter* to hospital in cases where no isolation facilities were available and the failure of the authorities to ensure that sickbays were established in foreign workers' camps meant that, by contrast with western Europeans, very few *Ostarbeiter* had access to suitable medical treatment. By contrast, Belgians were admitted to the same medical institutions as Germans and were accommodated in beds alongside German patients in Düsseldorf. While health officials were ordered to admit *Ostarbeiter* only in the most serious circumstances and to limit their stay to a maximum of three weeks, it is clear that no such limits were imposed on the hospitalisation of Belgians who were permitted to remain in hospital until they had recovered. A number of Belgians spent long periods in Düsseldorf hospitals indicating that many of them suffered serious illness during their stay in Germany. As the war continued the length of hospitalisations also increased. The average hospital stay in 1941 was twenty days; however, by 1945 the average hospital stay had increased to forty-four days (see Table 12 on page 257). While these statistics point to worsening health amongst Belgians who suffered more serious bouts of ill health as the war continued, lengthy hospitalisations are also an index of the comparatively good treatment Belgians received. But hospital admission records tell only one part of the story. Health services were also dispensed through doctors' surgeries and camp doctors; however, little is known about foreign workers' access to private doctors or the extent to which medical services were provided to camp residents.

Belgians received hospital treatment in Düsseldorf for a range of medical conditions (Appendix 22 on page 358). Many were hospitalised for the treatment of injuries such as contusions, fractured limbs, burns and the amputation of fingers or

[53] Report on the deaths of Ukrainian men Scharafonow and Pojnajkov from 21.02.1944 quoted in Ibid., 291.
[54] Ibid.

limbs. These injuries are typical of the heavy industrial work in which many of them were engaged, and follow a similar pattern to those employed at Deutsche Werft. Stomach conditions, such as ulcers and gastritis, also resulted in a number of hospitalisations. Respiratory infections such as influenza, bronchitis, pneumonia and tonsillitis were also key causes of hospitalisation. Another common cause of hospitalisation was medical conditions such as infected wounds, abscesses, boils, skin infections and scabies that flourished due to poor hygiene and living conditions. Düsseldorf's proximity to Belgium also meant it was possible for health officials to send Belgians home if they were likely to suffer an extended period of incapacity. Leonard A suffered from stomach ulcers during his stay in Germany. He was initially given leave from his job on medical grounds on 6 October 1942; however, when it became clear that he would be unable to work for some time, Leonard A was sent home to Belgium on 19 October 1942. Leonard A was treated in Belgium where his medical bills and sickness benefits were paid through the Central German Health Insurance Fund for Belgium and Northern France. Upon his recovery in mid-December 1942 Leonard A returned to Germany where he continued to work until the end of the war.[55] Sick workers who were well enough to travel were often sent home for medical treatment. Upon their recovery they often returned to Germany – either under pressure from labour administrators in Belgium or out of financial necessity.

Table 12: Average period of hospitalisation of Belgian patients in Düsseldorf (in days), 1941-1945

1941	*1942*	*1943*	*1944*	*1945*
20	21	26	28	44

Source: Statistics based on lists of Belgian patients for various Düsseldorf hospitals: SVG/DO, R.451/Tr.24.322.

Belgian hospitalisations in Düsseldorf included relatively few for life-threatening infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis and diphtheria. This is perhaps an indicator that the workers' living conditions in Düsseldorf were less cramped and therefore less prone to outbreaks of infectious diseases. There were just six Belgian deaths in Düsseldorf attributed to tuberculosis. By contrast the number of *Ostarbeiter* afflicted with tuberculosis rose rapidly due to the miserable living conditions and the fact that medical officials did not, as a general rule, carry out screening of

[55] SVG/DO, SDR 560.

Ostarbeiter.[56] Tuberculosis spread amongst *Ostarbeiter* on a catastrophic scale in Düsseldorf. At the beginning of 1944 medical officials in neighbouring Neuss-Grevenbroich warned of the "alarming spread of the tuberculosis epidemic amongst male and female *Ostarbeiter*". Officials observed that at some workplaces in Düsseldorf-Ratingen the number of tuberculosis cases amongst deceased *Ostarbeiter* had more than doubled.[57] While the rate of tuberculosis infection reached epidemic proportions amongst *Ostarbeiter*, the rate of tuberculosis infection amongst western Europeans was apparently comparatively low. There are no records indicating that Belgians were admitted to hospitals in Düsseldorf for the treatment of tuberculosis. The screening of Belgian workers for infectious diseases such as tuberculosis prior to their departure for Germany, the provision of relatively good standards of medical care to western Europeans and the return of western European workers who were expected to suffer an extended period of incapacity to their home countries all helped to limit the spread of infectious diseases amongst Belgian workers in Düsseldorf.

Of course, Belgian workers enjoyed better living conditions and food provisions than their counterparts from the Soviet Union. In general, western Europeans were in better physical health and were therefore less susceptible to infection. In many respects the Nazis' appalling treatment of *Ostarbeiter* was a self-fulfilling prophecy. *Ostarbeiter* were regarded as sub-human and lived in crowded conditions with very limited access to washing facilities. This inevitably led to outbreaks of infectious disease such scabies, typhus and tuberculosis. Ironically, while the Nazi authorities created the conditions in which infectious diseases could flourish amongst foreign workers, Nazi doctors considered typhus, for example, as a community disease and blamed members of inferior races, who were regarded as the carriers of disease, for the spread of epidemics. The notion that foreigners were carriers of disease also took hold amongst the German population. German patients at the Catholic hospital in nearby Krefeld's Uerdingen district objected to Poles and *Ostarbeiter* being accommodated in the same hospital wards, not because of racial prejudices, but rather due to a genuine fear that they might contract an infectious disease from these patients.[58] According to a report by the Security Service, the accommodation of racial aliens in German hospitals was common cause for complaint across Germany, particularly with respect to German patients being forced

[56] Sparing, "Die medizinische Behandlung von Zwangsarbeitern," 284.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., 280.

to wait to see a doctor alongside POWs and Poles they considered unclean and a health risk.[59] There are also notable differences in the specific health issues faced by Belgians in Berlin compared with those who were deployed in Düsseldorf. There were comparatively lower rates of tuberculosis mortality amongst Belgians in Düsseldorf, while in Berlin, by contrast, a number of Belgians were admitted to hospitals for the treatment of tuberculosis, and tuberculosis was a leading cause of death amongst Belgians deployed in the city. The reasons behind the lower rates of tuberculosis infection and mortality in Düsseldorf remain unclear; however, possible explanations might include better living standards in Düsseldorf, greater numbers living outside camps in private accommodation and the city's closer proximity to Belgium which meant that sick workers could be sent home more easily.

Hospital admission records indicate that at least seven Belgian mothers gave birth in Düsseldorf hospitals between 1942 and 1945. Pregnant Belgian women were allowed to return home for the birth of their child, even in the later stages of the war. Thus it is likely that these mothers had elected to remain in Germany for the birth – perhaps due to the social stigma attached to unwed mothers or simply because they did not want to be parted from the father of their child. Illustrating the good standard of postnatal care afforded to Belgian mothers, the new mothers spent several days, and in some cases weeks, in hospital after the birth. Despite shortages of hospital beds and the Nazis' demand that precedence be given to German mothers, Belgian mothers could expect a similar level of postnatal care. In an apparent anomaly, pregnant *Ostarbeiter* women were admitted to the women's clinic in Düsseldorf for childbirth until at least May 1943.[60] However, it is likely that these women were under pressure to return to work as soon as possible after the birth. Coinciding with the ban on *Ostarbeiter* women returning home, a nursery for the children of *Ostarbeiter* was established in September 1943 at the *Ostarbeiterlager "Alte Mühle"* in Düsseldorf-Heerdt. This home was most likely established by the Böhler & Co AG Edelstahlwerk, which ran the camp, in order to return pregnant employees to work as soon as possible after childbirth. The home could house thirty to forty children and there were facilities for a German and Russian attendant who oversaw the children. Little is known about the treatment or fate of children who lived there.[61] However, if the mortality rates at other children's homes are an indicator, we can

[59] Boberach, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, vol 13, 4026-7. Nr.304 (30.07.1942).
[60] Sparing, "Die medizinische Behandlung von Zwangsarbeitern," 262.
[61] SVG/DO, BUR 71, Camps Douteux, Reg. Bez. Düsseldorf, 406.

probably safely assume that the care provided at the home was very rudimentary. Krupp in Essen set up the "Buschmannshof" children's home in Voerde near Dinslaken for the children of *Ostarbeiter* employed at the Gussstahlfabrik plant. Of the 120 children who were housed at the home, at least 48 died in a diphtheria epidemic in the autumn and winter of 1944, apparently due to their poor diet. There is much to suggest that the children of *Ostarbeiter* were treated as "useless eaters".[62] The level of care afforded to the children of *Ostarbeiter* at the *Ostarbeiterlager "Alte Mühle"* was almost certainly determined by the dictates of the Nazi racial doctrine.

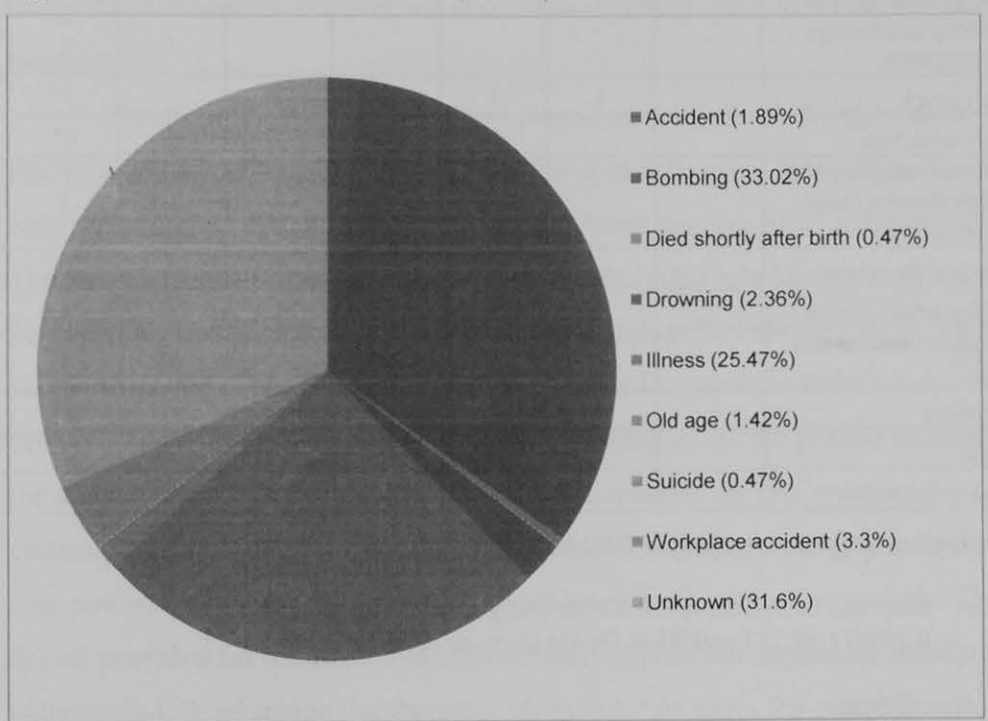
Using the records of Group VII and the reports of the BLOs, a total of 211 Belgians who died in Düsseldorf during the Second World War have been identified.[63] This figure represents 3.7 percent of the Belgians who were deployed in the city. The cause of death was unrecorded in almost a third of cases. Belgian civilians died in Düsseldorf from a broad range of causes over the course of the war (see Figure 23 on page 261). Like other German industrial centres Düsseldorf was subject to heavy bombing during the Second World War. Bombing was the biggest killer amongst Belgians in Düsseldorf and represents a third of all deaths in the city. Medical illness claimed a total of 49 Belgian lives. Interestingly, a total of 25 percent of deaths in Düsseldorf resulted from illness – a smaller proportion when compared to Berlin (see Table 13 on page 261 and Table 14 on page 262 and Table 7 on page 199). The deaths in Düsseldorf also include eight Belgians who died from illness whilst in custody and four Belgians who were killed when a bomb hit the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison on 23 April 1944.

[62] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 271-2.
[63] SVG/DO, R.184/Tr.39.157, Marburg Collection, 1141-8, 6081-5915 – 6082 (Film 21).

Table 13	Belgian deaths in Düsseldorf, 1940-1945							
Cause	*1940*	*1941*	*1942*	*1943*	*1944*	*1945*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Accident	0	0	0	1	2	1	4	1.89
Bombing[64]	0	2	1	24	21	19	70	33.02
Died shortly after birth	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.47
Drowning[65]	0	0	0	0	3	1	5	2.36
Illness[66]	1	4	6	12	13	15	54	25.47
Old age	0	1	0	0	2	0	3	1.42
Suicide	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.47
Workplace accident[67]	0	0	1	2	2	1	7	3.3
Unknown[68]	2	3	5	13	15	12	67	31.6
Total							212	

Source: Statistics compiled by the author using records from the SVG/DO: R.184/Tr.39.157 and BUR Ds-Dz (*Acts de décès*).

Figure 1: Cause of death amongst Belgians in Düsseldorf, 1940-1945



[64] Includes three Belgian deaths where the date of death was unknown.
[65] Includes one Belgian death where the date of death was unknown.
[66] Includes three Belgian deaths where the date of death was unknown.
[67] Includes one Belgian death where the date of death was unknown.
[68] Includes seventeen Belgian deaths where the date of death was unknown.

Table 14: Belgian deaths resulting from illness in Düsseldorf, 1940-1945								
Cause	*1940*	*1941*	*1942*	*1943*	*1944*	*1945*	*Total*	*%*
Infectious diseases								
Influenza				1			1*	2
Pneumonia				1	5	1	7*	14
Tuberculosis			1	3	1	1	6	12
Other medical illnesses								
Erysipelas (acute streptococcal skin infection)						1	1	2
Arteriosclerosis		1	1			1	3*	6
Cancer		2		1		1	4	8
Cirrhosis of the liver						1	1	2
Died after an operation to treat pyloric stenosis					1		1	1
Fever (cerebral)				1			1	1
Food poisoning						1		1
Frostbite on two legs and gangrene						1	1	1
Heart attack		1	1	1	2		5*	10
Heart weakness				1	1	4	6*	12
Infection resulting from a thigh fracture (bone pierced skin)						1	1	2
Intestinal complaint			1		1	1	3*	6
Kidney inflammation					1		1	2
Phlegmon/abscess and sepsis[69]			1	2		1	3	6
Poisoning					1		1*	2
Stroke		1			1		2	4
Weak constitution						1	1	2

* Individual listed under multiple categories.

Source: Statistics compiled by the author using records from the SVG/DO: R.184/Tr.39.157 and BUR Ds-Dz (*Acts de décès*).

6. Crime

Extensive police, judicial and *Gestapo* records relating to the war period in Düsseldorf survived the war and are available to researchers. These records form a key source of information regarding the experiences of Belgians in Germany and how Belgians were treated in their interactions with the German authorities. Postwar officials at the Düsseldorf State Attorney's Office compiled a list of all Belgians held at the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison between February 1939 and March 1947.[70] The registration cards of prisoners held at the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison during the

[69] Includes case where two different dates of death are indicated, one in 1942 and one in 1943.
[70] ITS/ARCH/Gruppe PP, Ordner 1450, pages 6-33.

Second World War were also deposited at the ITS in Bad Arolsen after the end of the war.[71] A total of 329 Belgians were detained at the institution between May 1940 and April 1945, including 63 women and 266 men. As illustrated by Appendix 23 on page 360, the prisoners held at the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison included those arrested in Düsseldorf, prisoners transferred to the institution by the police and judicial authorities in the wider Rhine-Ruhr region, as well as places further afield including Bavaria, Lower Saxony and Berlin. Those held at the institution also included Belgians who had been arrested in occupied Belgium. These prisoners were most likely "Night and Fog" prisoners and generally came to the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison via other penal institutions. A number of prisoners also arrived from Aachen and Cologne close to the German-Belgian border. Those transferred from Aachen included several who were accused of falsifying documents – most likely the falsification of travel and leave documents in order to return home to Belgium.

The criminal police and *Gestapo* played an integral role in repression throughout the Nazi era and worked hand-in-hand with penal authorities. The web of Nazi terror spread dramatically following the *Reichstag* fire of 27 February 1933. The Decree for the Protection of People and State (popularly known as the *Reichstag* Fire Decree) was passed at a meeting of the cabinet on 28 February 1933. This decree suspended civil liberties under the Weimar Constitution indefinitely. The decree brought an intensification of police intimidation, on the pretext of combating the alleged threat of a Communist uprising, and marked the beginning of the systematic repression of the political opposition. The police were granted extensive new powers including the authority to place suspects in protective custody. The decree provided for the arrest and incarceration of political opponents indefinitely without trial. Wachsmann has therefore observed: "At times the police operated parallel to the legal system".[72] Thousands of people were arrested in the months that followed and the German police soon expanded the net of those held in police custody, applying the provisions of the decree to arrest suspected criminals and "asocial" deviants, such as the homeless and beggars. On 13 November 1933 the Prussian Interior Ministry introduced protective police custody against "professional

[71] Prisoners serving shorter sentences generally served their time in prison, while prisoners serving longer sentences and those sentenced to hard labour generally commuted their sentences in a penitentiary. Ibid., Ordner 1450-1506.
[72] Wachsmann, *Hitler's prisons*, 165.

criminals" and certain sex offenders who had not committed any new offence. Thus it is clear that in the months following the Nazis' seizure of power the police were given wide-ranging new powers to arrest and detain political opponents and those regarded as detrimental to the *Volksgemeinschaft* indefinitely without trial even before they had committed a new offence. De Maen completed a survey of the files and subsequently reported to the Ministry for Reconstruction in Brussels that 90 percent of Belgian nationals detained by the *Gestapo* were Jewish émigrés who had fled to Belgium in 1938/1939, 5 percent stood accused of espionage and a further 5 percent were civilian workers.[73] Demonstrating the extensive use of the protective custody provisions, many of the Belgians held at the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison had been detained by *Gestapo* or police officers under the protective custody provisions.[74] On 16 September 1943 the prison authorities at Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison raised concerns with the *Gestapo* regarding the arrival of prisoners who had been placed in protective custody. Prison officials noted the "transfer of foreigners during the night, who are collected again in the morning".[75] It is apparent that foreigners were frequently detained by the *Gestapo* for a short period of time as a warning and to instil fear. Arrests often took place in the workplace or camps and were witnessed by work colleagues or fellow residents, reinforcing fear amongst the wider population.

Gestapo case files pertaining to Belgians illustrate the ways in which terror was frequently used to regulate relations between Düsseldorf's German residents and foreign workers. Relationships between the wives of German servicemen and foreign men were subject to particular scrutiny by the security services who followed up denunciations made by members of the public – often work colleagues or neighbours. Robert Gellately places heavy emphasis on denunciations to the *Gestapo* made willingly by members of the public, arguing that the "regime's dreaded enforcer would have been seriously hampered without a considerable degree of

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[73] SVG/DO, R.451/Tr.47662, Letter sent by de Maen, Head of the Belgian Search Mission in Bad Salzuflen, to the Belgian Ministry for Reconstruction (dated 21.03.1950). Reinhard Mann undertook a study of the files of the Düsseldorf *Gestapo*, examining 825 cases drawn randomly from the 70,000 surviving files. However, Mann excluded certain categories of *Gestapo* case-files, including those pertaining to foreigners, such as Jews and foreign workers. Reinhard Mann, *Protest und Kontrolle im Dritten Reich: Nationalsozialistische Herrschaft im Alltag einer rheinischen Großstadt*, Studien zur historischen Sozialwissenschaft (Frankfurt; New York: Campus Verlag, 1987).

[74] *Gestapo* case files are not available in all cases where a Belgian had been held in protective custody.

[75] Quoted in Leissa and Schröder, "Die Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen der ausländischen Arbeitskräfte in Düsseldorf," 199.

public cooperation".[76] From the end of 1940 on, "forbidden contact" with foreign civilians and POWs became a new mass criminal offence. Half of the *Gestapo* personal files in Düsseldorf deal with "forbidden contact" with foreigners, and *Gestapo* officers were busier with cases involving foreigners than anything else.[77] While German men were discouraged from such contact with foreign women they were often not punished for it, whereas the German authorities showed particular interest in "forbidden contact" between German women and foreign men. Affairs between the wives of German servicemen and foreigners were regarded as particularly serious because these affairs were regarded as a threat to the morale of the armed forces and moral indignation about improper conduct of German women and foreign men could lead to tensions in the workplace.

The relationship between a Belgian and a German woman whose husband was fighting on the front became common knowledge at the Klöckner-Werke AG in Düsseldorf. Tensions spilled over after Martha K reportedly gloated that "she had spent more enjoyable hours with [Belgian civilian worker] Julius P than with her husband during their honeymoon" and "would like to divorce her husband". It was also suggested that Martha K had also stated that "she would be happy to see her husband fall [fighting on the front]". Martha K and Julius P were both called up by the workplace overseer who confronted the two lovers over their adulterous relationship, reproaching them for their conduct. Angered by her treatment Martha K slapped the workplace overseer in the face. The overseer became so incensed that he responded by grabbing Martha K by the throat, thereby provoking Julius P to step in. Martha K was sacked by her employer after the incident, while Julius P was suspended and subsequently took up employment with a new employer. The two lovers were both questioned by the *Gestapo* and received an official warning about their adultery. The relationship soon came to an end after Julius P's wife arrived from Belgium to take up employment in Düsseldorf. In an interesting final twist, a German employee spoke to the overseer after the incident to report that she had overheard three foreigners saying that they "would bump off the workplace overseer" prompting him to write to the local branch of the Security Service to request protection or permission to carry a weapon.[78] This incident demonstrates that

[76] Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: enforcing racial policy, 1933-1945* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1990), 135-6.
[77] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 125-7.
[78] HStAD, RW58/53.086, Bl.4.

sometimes foreigners even managed to turn the tables on their German overseers and highlights the growing sense of unease some Germans must have felt with the large numbers of foreigners in their midst – especially once the likelihood of Germany's military defeat became evident.

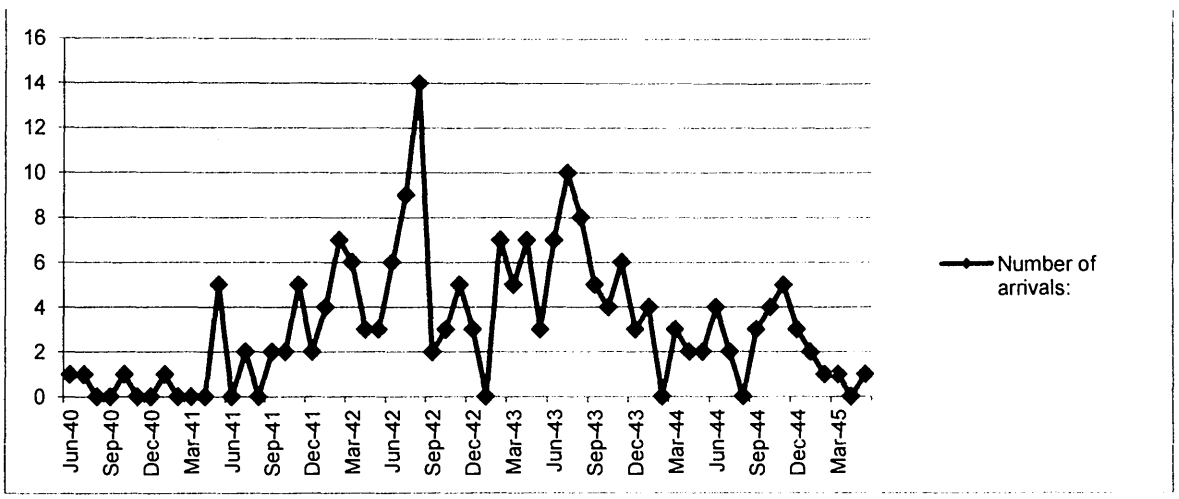
With thousands of foreign workers deployed in Düsseldorf, security officials relied increasingly upon members of the public, including foreign workers, to act as the eyes and ears of the Security Service. The authorities recognised that the Germans often reported cases of sexual contact with Poles or POWs out of the base motives of jealousy, revenge, resentment or disputes between neighbours.[79] Others denounced fellow Germans for perceived transgressions of the moral and racial codes. In July 1940 the Security Service reported on the growing criticism of the "undignified behaviour of German women towards racially alien foreigners".[80] Nazi officials regarded sexual intercourse with foreigners as a great crime and sought to stamp it out. The Reich Propaganda Head Office embarked on a campaign encouraging the "protection of one's own blood" and numerous verdicts against German women, particularly for sexual intercourse with foreigners, were published to act as a deterrent. This warning about the "protection of one's blood" extended to foreigners of "Germanic" origin and contradicted the racial code which did not forbid sexual relations between foreigners of "Germanic" origin, including Dutch and Flemish civilians.

In the Rhine-Ruhr the *Gestapo* also sought to restrict non-sexual contact between Germans and foreigners. Germans who were seen to be fraternising too closely with foreigners – even those who were not regarded as racial aliens – came under scrutiny from the *Gestapo*. In Essen, German Max G was interrogated by the *Gestapo* in April 1942.[81] Max G befriended Belgian Gilles V at a local pub. Gilles V spoke good German and Max G invited the Belgian to his apartment. The Belgian frequently visited his family in Brussels returning with goods that were rationed in Germany, including tobacco, clothing and shoes. Gilles V gave Max G, his wife and child each a pair of shoes, while he received payment for other goods. Challenged by *Gestapo* officers regarding his "improper dealings with foreigners" and "undignified conduct", Max G responded by claiming that "until now I had not thought about it, in part because the Belgian is employed in a position of trust by the German railways".

[79] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 129.
[80] Boberach, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, vol. 5, 1354. Nr.103: 08.07.1940).
[81] HStAD, RW58/15.062.

While social contact between Belgians and Germans was not strictly forbidden, zealous *Gestapo* officials actively discouraged friendships between Germans and foreigners, which they regarded as inappropriate. The *Gestapo* interrogators made it very clear that such close contact between Germans and foreigners would not be tolerated. It is difficult to assess the nature of the two men's friendship on the basis of Max G's interrogation. There were clearly mutual benefits for both men, but Max G's account also provides indications that a genuine friendship developed between them. However, admonished by *Gestapo* officials for his inappropriate dealings with a foreigner, Max G agreed to break off his friendship with the Belgian worker, probably fearing that the failure to do so would bring serious consequences. This case illustrates how practice often contradicted policy and how practice was shaped by local authorities. Herbert observes that the dictates of Nazi racial policies, and specifically the differential treatment of foreign workers according to racial ideology and foreign policy, were not always accepted by the German populace.[82] Pre-existing ideas about foreigners persisted and many Germans probably simply regarded workers recruited outside Germany as foreigners without differentiating between different national groups.

Figure 24: Belgians arrested in Düsseldorf arriving at the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison, 1940-1945



Source: Author's statistics based on research into ITS/ARCH/Gruppe PP, Ordner 1450-1506 and ITS/ARCH/Gruppe PP, Ordner 1450, pages 6-33.

The prisoners transferred to the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison included twenty-two Belgians who had been arrested in occupied Belgium for oppositional activities, including distributing anti-German materials, Bolshevist activities,

[82] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 106.

possessing illegal weapons, sabotage and high treason. Most "Night and Fog" prisoners came to the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison via other penal institutions, including the Wittlich prison in Cologne and the Rheinbach penitentiary. One Belgian prisoner was transferred to the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison from as far afield as the Kaisheim penitentiary in Bavaria. With just one exception, "Night and Fog" prisoners were subsequently transferred from the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison to other penal institutions – their stay at the institution ranging from just a few days to eighteen months. "Night and Fog" prisoners were transferred to institutions including the Wittlich prison, Wuppertal prison, Werl prison east of Dortmund, Remscheid-Lüttringhausen penitentiary and the Oberems prison camp in Gütersloh. Certain prisons and penitentiaries were designated as sites for capital punishment during the Nazi era. In 1937 capital punishment was carried out in a total of eleven institutions; however, a huge increase in the number of death sentences imposed by the German judiciary during the war meant that this number had risen to 21 by 1945. Executions were not carried out at the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison and thus Belgian prisoners who stood accused of capital offences were probably transferred to penal institutions where executions could be carried out.

The month of arrest of those imprisoned at the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison shows that arrests peaked in mid-1942 mirroring the pattern in Berlin (see Figure 24 on page 267 and Table 15 on page 270). Not all Belgians held at the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison had been convicted by Germany's courts. The institution also served as a remand prison for those who were being held pending further investigation. Appendix 24 on page 361 shows the reason for the detention of those held at the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison. Matching the pattern in Berlin, a high proportion of the offences committed by Belgians were property offences, including theft, burglary, looting and receiving stolen goods. These offences accounted for 38.24 percent of the crimes allegedly committed by the Belgians held at the institution. This percentage was notably lower than in Berlin where 49 percent of prisoners were accused of theft. Individual case files indicate that most thefts were minor in nature and usually involved the pilfering of food. These thefts were probably opportunistic acts carried out by individuals suffering from hunger. Economic offences, such as breaches of the law in relation to black-marketeering, also represent a significant proportion of offences. Others fell foul of the law by seeking to supplement their meagre rations through illegally fishing or trapping wild

animals such as rabbits. While the police and judicial records for Berlin show that Belgians living in the city were involved in gangs that carried out organised crime, there is no evidence of such activity in Düsseldorf.

Across Germany, theft was the most common crime committed by foreigners. According to statistics produced by the Reich Statistics Office, theft represented 58.3 percent of the offences committed by foreigners in the first half of 1943, compared with 44.5 percent of those committed by Germans.[83] The sentences imposed by Düsseldorf's courts for theft convictions during the first years of the war tended to be more lenient, although heavy penalties were also imposed in some cases. Comparing the available information in relation to the sentencing of those convicted of theft in Berlin with the sentencing in Düsseldorf (see Table 16 on page 270), it is evident that sentencing tended to be harsher in Berlin from the first years of the war. While a number of those convicted of theft in Düsseldorf in 1941/1942 received sentences of less than twenty-eight days, in Berlin the shortest sentence imposed was one month. Judges in Berlin and Düsseldorf imposed lengthier sentences for theft as the war progressed. However, there are no indications that the Düsseldorf courts sentenced Belgians convicted of theft or the plundering of goods to death, as was the case in Berlin during the latter stages of the war. While property offences might seem minor, German judges who wished to set an example and deter looting often treated those who were convicted very harshly. A total of 1,621 individuals received the death penalty for property offences in the Reich in 1943 alone. This figure represents a third of the death sentences imposed in that year.[84] Certainly, the fear that Berlin's large foreigner population would rise up prompted Berlin's judiciary to impose harsher sentences upon foreigners. Perhaps Goebbels' demand that the authorities adopt a harsh stance against foreigners who committed crimes led to harsher sentencing and more executions in Berlin. Belgians were generally treated more leniently. The stark contrast between the treatment of Belgians and *Ostarbeiter* is illustrated clearly by the case of young Walloon François D who was convicted of trapping a rabbit in contravention of the hunting laws. François D was sentenced to four months imprisonment at the Wittlich youth prison.[85] Poles who were convicted of the same crime faced the death sentence in a number of cases. Poles were many times more likely to be sentenced to death than Germans and represented half of all

[83] ITS/ARCH/Inform. Justizvollzuganstalten Ordner 47 (I - 487 – NG 908), pages 162-3.
[84] Wachsmann, *Hitler's prisons*, 315.
[85] SVG/DO, SDR 165054.

death sentences imposed in the first half of 1942, including twenty Poles found guilty of the "illegal slaughter of animals".[86] Thus while the court's sentencing may seem harsh, François D's status as a western European worker ensured that he was protected from an even more severe punishment.

Table 15: Belgians detained for theft in Düsseldorf, 1940-1945				
1941	*1942*	*1943*	*1944*	*1945*
9	30	16	16	5

Source: Author's statistics based on research into ITS/ARCH/Gruppe PP, Ordner 1450-1506 and ITS/ARCH/Gruppe PP, Ordner 1450, pages 6-33.

Table 16: Sentences imposed upon Belgians convicted of theft in Düsseldorf, 1940-1945						
	1941	*1942*	*1943*	*1944*	*1945*	*Total*
7 days		1				1
10 days		5	1			6
14 days	1	6	1	3		11
21 days		3	1	1		5
28 days		6	1			7
35 days				1		1
42 days		1		1		2
56 days	7	1	2			10
84 days			1	2		3
98 days		1				1
112 days			1	3		4
140 days			1			1
168 days		2	1	1		4
252 days			1			1
365 days		3	1	2	4	10
449 days		1				1
477 days		1				1
533 days					1	1
730 days	1		3	1		5
1,095 days				1		1
1,825 days			1			1

Source: Author's statistics based on research into ITS/ARCH/Gruppe PP, Ordner 1450-1506 and ITS/ARCH/Gruppe PP, Ordner 1450, pages 6-33.

The judicial system struggled to cope with its heavy caseload in the final chaotic months of the war. Alfred M was arrested for theft in January 1945. He was accused of stealing ten pounds of rice and some wine – perhaps from a bombed out shop during an air-raid alarm. Alfred M was initially transferred to the Wuppertal

[86] Wachsmann, *Hitler's prisons*, 315. This law was mainly aimed at farmers and butchers.

prison, but was subsequently transferred to the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison on 5 March 1945 and the Remscheid-Lüttringhausen penitentiary on 29 March 1945. He was finally released by the Allies on 9 May 1945.[87] Those arrested in the final months of the war could spend months in prison awaiting trial even for a relatively minor offence. Alfred M was, however, more fortunate than some Belgians in other parts of Germany who were executed for theft or looting in the final months of the war. While the judicial authorities could carry out executions readily in Berlin where condemned prisoners could be executed at more than one institution, executions could not be carried out in Düsseldorf and thus those who were condemned to death were transferred to Cologne-Klingelpütz until 1945 and Wolfenbüttel in the final months of the war. The Düsseldorf Special Court sentenced ninety-two people to death during the war, including seventeen foreigners.[88] It is notable that there are no indications that Belgians fell victim to summary executions in the final months of the war in Düsseldorf.

In December 1944 three young Belgian men, Armand C, Josef V and Jean Va, were tried for attempted murder by the Düsseldorf Special Court. Armand C, Josef V and Jean Va had been arrested by the *Gestapo* in Belgium in May 1944 and transported to an AEL run by the Deutsche Röhrenwerke in Oberhausen. The men arrived at the camp in June 1944 and escaped just days later with the intent of making their way home. When the men came to the Rhine they stole a rowing boat and crossed the river. In the Moers district the men stopped in some woods and lit a fire to dry their clothes. They were spotted and when police sought to apprehend them they resisted, seizing a pistol and slightly injuring a policeman. The men's experience was probably typical of those who sought to return home illegally. While regular checks on trains ensured that few Belgians managed to make it home by stowing away on trains, patrols also ensured that those who attempted the journey on foot also had little prospect of success even when seeking to return from regions close to the Belgian-German border. The three men were convicted of aggravated robbery and grievous bodily harm. Armand C was sentenced to five years imprisonment, while Josef V and Jean Va were both sentenced to six years imprisonment. While Armand C had avoided the death penalty, he paid a heavy toll as a result of his detention. Armand C was detained in the Düsseldorf-Derendorf

[87] SVG/DO, SDR 157311.
[88] Rafael R Leissa and Joachim Schröder, "Überwachung und Disziplinierung der ausländischen Arbeitskräfte," 329.

prison from 5 July 1944 until 29 September 1944 when he was transferred to the Wuppertal prison and finally, as the Allied land invasion neared, to Remscheid-Lüttringhausen penitentiary on 12 February 1945. As defeat loomed, prison evacuations became a common occurrence, with some prisoners facing a series of transfers as the Allies and Red Army approached. In November 1944 Reich Justice Minister Otto-Georg Thierack ordered the evacuation of prisons on the left bank of the Rhine. In Düsseldorf, these were vacated by March 1945. As the Allies approached Düsseldorf several Belgian prisoners were transferred to the Remscheid-Lüttringhausen penitentiary and the Wuppertal prison. By the time of his arrival at the Remscheid-Lüttringhausen penitentiary Armand C weighed just 50kg and his physical condition was described as poor. On 9 May 1945 Armand C was pardoned and released by the prison review board instituted by Allies following Germany's defeat and arrived back in Belgium on 11 May 1945. The medical examination carried out by the repatriation authorities upon his return to Belgium showed he was afflicted with tuberculosis and pleurisy and was also suffering from heart cachexia.[89] Those who spent the final chaotic months of the war in prison paid a particularly heavy price and many died due to deteriorating health or infectious disease, or were killed in massacres carried out by Nazi officials who wished to ensure that convicted criminals did not survive Germany's defeat. Wachsmann observes that while killing was often random in the final months of the war, societal groups, such as foreigners, who had always been targeted, continued to bear the brunt of Nazi violence.[90] Belgians like Armand C who spent the final months of the war in prison experienced a significant deterioration in their health and could suffer long-lasting and even permanent effects on their health. The fate of his two partners in fortune is not known. Twelve Belgians died in the Düsseldorf-Derendorf prison. As a testament to the harsh treatment of prisoners and the inadequacy of the medical treatment prisoners received, eight Belgians died from illness whilst in custody. Three of these deaths resulted from a phlegmon which developed into sepsis, while the remaining cases included one case of renal failure and sepsis, one case of tuberculosis, stomach cancer and a heart attack.

[89] SVG/DO, SDR 18834.
[90] Wachsmann, *Hitler's prisons*, 320.

7. Conclusions

The experiences of Belgian civilian workers who were deployed in the Rhine-Ruhr city of Düsseldorf have been examined closely using issues surrounding housing, health, mortality and crime as a baseline to analyse their experiences and treatment by the German authorities. These measures have allowed for the comparison of the experiences of those deployed in Düsseldorf versus Berlin. The first finding of this study of Belgians who were deployed in Düsseldorf is that a high proportion went to Germany on a voluntary basis. Their employment patterns frequently mirrored those of their forebears who went to Germany in the nineteenth and early twentieth century in pursuit of employment. In a close parallel to the seasonal employment patterns of Belgian migrant workers, many volunteers took up a series of labour assignments in Germany. These workers often completed labour assignments and returned to Belgium in the winter months or delayed the commencement of a labour assignment until after winter had passed.

Düsseldorf's proximity to Belgium brought significant advantages and probably ensured that the city was a preferred destination for many Belgian volunteers. As individual cases have illustrated, some Düsseldorf employers permitted Belgian employees to make frequent short visits home. Some conscripted workers suggested that only volunteers were granted leave. It is highly likely that employers regarded volunteers as less of a flight risk and more likely to return if they were granted leave to return home. These cases have also illustrated that employers used their own discretion in granting leave to foreign employees and did not strictly adhere to the Nazis' rules with respect to the granting of leave. In many respects the flexible arrangements between German employers and Belgian volunteers, especially in the first years of the occupation, represent a continuation of earlier employment trends. Visits home provided the opportunity to source foodstuffs, clothing and other goods that were not available in Germany. The opportunity to make regular visits home therefore made a real material difference in the day-to-day existence of foreign workers in Germany. Düsseldorf's proximity to Belgium also allowed those deployed in the city to maintain closer familial ties with loved ones in Belgium. Those who were ill could also return home to Belgium more readily, as the shorter journey was less arduous for sick workers. By contrast, the longer journey to Berlin meant that Belgian workers returned home less frequently and were generally granted longer periods of leave. Indeed, many conscripted workers in Berlin never

had the opportunity to return home, with some spending up to thirty months in Germany without visiting home. Finally, Düsseldorf was liberated on 16 April 1945 when the Allies occupied Benrath and other southern parts of the city. By contrast with the delays in the repatriation of foreign workers who were stranded for weeks in Berlin after the city's liberation in May 1945, Belgians who were in Düsseldorf at the conclusion of hostilities quickly returned home with some departing as early as 18 April 1945.

Turning to the question of how Belgians were treated in Düsseldorf, it is clear that Belgians received preferential treatment and this made a measurable difference in their daily lives. Housing was a key factor in the workers' daily life and Belgians enjoyed distinct benefits over their counterparts from the Soviet Union. While it is difficult to determine what percentage of Belgian workers lived outside camps, closer analysis of residence records indicates that a significant proportion of Belgians lived in private accommodation. Anecdotal evidence indicates that Düsseldorf employers housed a significant proportion of their western European employees privately, reserving camp accommodation for *Ostarbeiter* and POWs. Lodging in private accommodation allowed Belgian workers greater freedom and provided greater opportunities to improve one's material position. Living in private accommodation – either as a boarder or in rented accommodation – made for more comfortable domestic conditions, and those living outside camps were also less exposed to infectious diseases. The availability of private accommodation in Düsseldorf also encouraged Belgians to bring other family members to join them. The comparison of the size of foreign workers' camps in Düsseldorf and Berlin would suggest that there were fewer large camp complexes for western European civilian workers in Düsseldorf. Belgians who were accommodated in camps in Düsseldorf tended to live in smaller camps. While the German authorities often implemented security measures such as guard posts, patrols and curfews in larger camps, especially those housing *Ostarbeiter*, surveillance tended to be less pervasive in smaller camps and residents therefore enjoyed greater freedom of movement, being able to utilise social and other facilities used by Germans. Health services are another area where substantive differences can be discerned in the treatment of foreign workers. Hospital admission records show that Belgians had a high level of access to medical services and the health authorities admitted western Europeans to the same hospital wards as German patients. Despite shortages of hospital beds,

many Belgians were also allowed to remain in hospital until they had recovered fully and many spent lengthy periods in hospital. This contrasts starkly with the treatment of *Ostarbeiter* who were often refused hospital admission on the grounds that there were no isolation rooms to accommodate them, sometimes with tragic results.

Police, *Gestapo* and judicial records have also provided an avenue through which to compare the treatment of Belgian workers in Düsseldorf and Berlin, as well as that of their counterparts from eastern Europe. The analysis of sentencing in relation to theft convictions has shown that the judicial authorities in Berlin generally imposed more severe penalties than their colleagues in Düsseldorf. No Belgians were executed in Düsseldorf, whereas a total of seventy-eight Belgians were executed in Berlin during the war – twenty-one of these death sentences were imposed for theft convictions. Many of these death sentences were imposed in 1943 and were most likely a response to an increasing wave of thefts committed by foreign workers in Berlin. Faced with an increasing problem of criminality amongst the foreign population, Berlin's judiciary adopted a more heavy-handed approach applying more punitive sentences even for low-level crimes such as theft.

The extensive *Gestapo* records in Düsseldorf offer valuable insights into everyday terror and the treatment of Belgians in their interactions with their employers and the German authorities. Belgian civilian workers in Düsseldorf, most of whom were volunteers, defended their rights as employees and sought to ensure that promises with respect to living conditions were upheld. Western European women proved to be particularly problematic for the Düsseldorf authorities. Like their male counterparts, a significant proportion of the Belgian women deployed in Düsseldorf went to Germany on a voluntary basis and quickly withdrew their labour if they were dissatisfied with their living or working conditions. While the German authorities issued Belgian women with warnings about their conduct, the *Gestapo* and other officials seemed reluctant to institute severe penalties against Belgian women. *Gestapo* cases relating to "forbidden contact" between Belgian civilians and Germans have highlighted inconsistencies in the treatment of Belgian workers. Belgians, especially Flemings who were regarded as "Germanic" people, were generally afforded better treatment than their counterparts from the Soviet Union. However, individual cases have shown that German officials often regarded all foreign workers with suspicion and did not necessarily recognise the Nazi racial hierarchy.

CONCLUSIONS

The Nazi labour recruitment program in Belgium enjoyed great success in the first years of the German occupation. By September 1941 Belgian civilians constituted the largest single group of workers from the west.[1] The German Military Administration introduced economic policies intended to encourage Belgians to take up employment in Germany. However, despite chronic unemployment, the Belgian authorities did not compel Belgian civilians to take up labour assignments in Germany and those who departed for Germany during the first years of the occupation went voluntarily. In the Netherlands, by contrast, there was a much greater degree of collaboration on the part of the authorities and the majority of those who departed for Germany in the first years of the occupation were unemployed workers who were forced to accept labour assignments in Germany under penalty of having their unemployment benefits withdrawn. The Dutch authorities also intervened with charitable and relief organisations, ensuring that all forms of charitable and poor relief were withheld from the families of those who refused to accept work in Germany. Dutch historian BA Sijes has therefore argued that unemployed Dutch workers were compelled to choose between accepting work in Germany or starvation. Faced with limited job prospects in Belgium and finding themselves in very straitened circumstances many Belgians accepted voluntary labour assignments in Germany.

By drawing upon a broad range of historical records relating to the deployment of Belgians in Germany, this thesis has broadened our understanding of the employment patterns of Belgians during the Second World War. Statistical analysis of residence records from Berlin and Düsseldorf has provided a picture of the demographic profile of the Belgians deployed in Germany and has been combined with examination of the personal files of around 400 Belgians. This thesis has illustrated that the employment patterns of Belgian volunteers frequently mirrored those of Belgian migrant workers who went to Germany during the

[1] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 98.

nineteenth and early twentieth century in pursuit of seasonal work. Like their forbears, many Belgians accepted labour assignments in parts of Germany that were close to Belgium. In areas close to the German-Belgian border like the Rhine-Ruhr, volunteers made up a high proportion of Belgian civilian workers. In a close parallel to the seasonal employment patterns of Belgian migrant workers, many Belgian workers completed labour assignments and returned to Belgium in the winter months or delayed the commencement of a labour assignment until after the winter passed, while others would take up a series of labour assignments in Germany over the course of the occupation. More enlightened employers recognised that flexible employment arrangements, such as the granting of regular leave to return home, fostered good relations with foreign employees and helped to secure their willingness to continue working in Germany; whereas the refusal to grant leave to return home prompted many Belgians to leave Germany at the end of an employment contract or breach their employment contracts. German employers often used their discretion when it came to employment arrangements and the granting of leave to foreign employees and did not strictly adhere to the Nazis' rules and regulations. In many respects flexible arrangements between German employers and Belgian volunteers represent a continuation of earlier employment trends, especially during the first years of the German occupation. The periodisation or the division of Nazi labour policies into distinct phases, characterised by voluntary and compulsory labour recruitment, is challenged by the analysis of the employment patterns of Belgians who worked in Düsseldorf and Berlin. The work histories of Belgian civilian workers are very often variegated. The nature of a foreign worker's employment could also change over the course of the war. Those who initially went to Germany voluntarily might find that they were prevented from ending their employment and were therefore forced to remain in Germany against their will effectively as forced labourers. Belgians who had worked in Germany on a voluntary basis before returning to Belgium were in some cases subsequently conscripted and forced to go back to Germany.

Acceptance of a voluntary labour assignment in Germany came with the expectation that one also had the right to end one's employment and return home. The introduction of compulsory labour assignments prompted some Belgian

volunteers to reconsider their decision to accept work in Germany and led many to seek to return home while they still could. Thus the introduction of conscription jeopardised the German recruitment campaign in Belgium, which had hitherto enjoyed significant success. Belgians who departed for Germany as volunteers went on their own terms and also expected that promises they had received with respect to living conditions and wages would be upheld and their rights would be safeguarded. Some of the volunteers' expectations resulted from promises made by labour administrators in Belgium, while others stemmed from their own perceptions about their position and rights. Later conscripts would also have a sense of their greater rights as western Europeans and would also assert these rights in the face of perceived encroachments by employers and German labour officials. Tensions arose between Belgian workers who refused to accept a subordinate position and German employers and labour officials. Perhaps the Belgians' high expectations were also a sign of the tacit acceptance of the new order in Europe and the more privileged position of Belgians within the Nazi racial hierarchy. The privileged status bestowed upon western European workers was empowering. Belgians who went to Germany expected that they would enjoy the same rights as German citizens and asserted their rights when it came to issues such as freedom of movement, the entitlement to live in private accommodation or joint accommodation with their spouse, wages, working conditions and food provisions. The rights and privileges Belgians enjoyed were protected until the end of the war, even in the face of vociferous objections from Germans who increasingly felt that western European workers took advantage of their position to the detriment of German citizens. While Belgians defended their rights and protested against unfair treatment, fear of the consequences of sabotage or resistance ensured that most Belgian workers generally tended to avoid higher risk activities and joint actions. Belgians did not face the same desperate plight experienced by their counterparts from eastern Europe. With very good prospects of surviving the war and returning home, most Belgians were reluctant to participate in high risk activities fearing that they might be transferred to a labour education or concentration camp. The Nazis' use of terror to control the population succeeded to a considerable degree in preventing foreign workers' opposition from coalescing into forms of behaviour that might have posed a fundamental challenge to the regime.

Through a strong focus on the Belgian women's experiences, this thesis has contributed to a greater understanding of the specificity of their experiences. Western European women proved especially problematic for employers and the German authorities. A significant number of Belgian women departed for Germany, especially during the early years of the occupation when many took up voluntary labour assignments. Few Belgian women came forward to tell their story after the war and historical accounts have largely focussed on men's experiences and have ignored women's wartime experiences. The analysis of women's departures reveals a complex picture. In spite of the economic constraints and conscription for *Arbeitseinsatz* that compelled many women to depart for Germany, the experiences of Belgian women show that they still had some room to manoeuvre and many women made the choice to go to Germany for their own reasons. Belgian women enjoyed a privileged status as western European workers, which brought greater confidence. The public outrage in Belgium that surrounded the deployment of Belgian women in German industry ensured that the German labour administration and employers were forced to make concessions to Belgian women – concessions that they readily exploited. Women who were conscripted worked pro-actively to secure their return to Belgium, a number using pregnancy – feigned or real – as an avenue to obtain leave to return home. Whatever the circumstances of their departure, Belgian women were not simply at the mercy of the German employers and labour authorities. Their departure for Germany even proved a liberating experience for some women. Belgian women helped to shape their own destinies and were not simply victims of the occupier's labour policies.

The final sections of this thesis have explored the experiences of Belgian workers in the cities of Berlin and Düsseldorf. By drawing upon case studies of the cities of Berlin and Düsseldorf, as well as the accounts of Belgians who were deployed in other parts of the Reich, this social history of Belgians deployed in Germany has provided a nuanced picture of their experiences. This thesis has shown that policies were not applied uniformly across Germany and the role of officials at regional and local level has also been emphasised. In some regions officials sought to prohibit Belgian workers from living in private accommodation, whereas many Belgians, both Flemings and Walloons, lived in private accommodation in Berlin and

Düsseldorf, even as bombing destroyed housing and Germans struggled to secure accommodation. In Berlin, foreigners represented a larger proportion of the population, especially after many Berliners were evacuated from the city. The sheer number of foreign workers deployed in Berlin loomed large in the minds of Berlin officials and German inhabitants alike, and many began to fear that foreigners would revolt. The Berlin police and judiciary adopted a harsh stance towards foreigners accused of committing crimes and therefore threatening law and order in the city. The examination of the sentencing of Belgians by German courts has shown that, by comparison with the sentences imposed on Belgians in Düsseldorf, those handed down by Berlin's judiciary were particularly punitive. The harsh approach adopted by officials in Berlin was a direct response to local conditions and imperatives. Leading Nazi Joseph Goebbels was also an influential figure in Berlin and exhorted Berlin's law enforcement agencies to treat the city's foreign inhabitants harshly. The privileged status of Belgians did, however, spare them from the worst excesses of Berlin authorities, with few Belgians subject to extra-legal summary executions during the final stages of the war.

Health and medical records have also provided great insights into the treatment of foreign workers and the implementation of Nazi racial policies. The shortage of doctors and pharmacists during the war meant Germans often found it difficult to access a doctor, and for many foreign workers access to health services was even more limited. The examination of hospital, medical and health insurance records has illustrated, however, that Belgians nevertheless enjoyed a comparatively good standard of medical care. Those who were seriously ill were generally sent home or hospitalized if they were unable to travel. By contrast with *Ostarbeiter* who were treated as expendable, chronically ill Belgians might spend weeks or months in German hospitals. In keeping with their elevated position in the Nazi racial hierarchy, sick Belgians admitted to German hospitals were accommodated in beds alongside German patients and were afforded a similar level of care. The examination of health insurance records has, nevertheless, shown a steady increase in the number of Belgian workers suffering from medical illnesses towards the end of the war, indicating that the health of Belgians deployed deteriorated as the war

continued. Despite enjoying better standards of medical care, mortality records show that illness claimed the lives of many Belgians in Germany.

This thesis has looked beyond Nazi racial policies in order to provide greater understanding of the factors that shaped the experiences of Belgian civilians in Germany. It has been argued that an important distinction must be made in relation to the material advantages western European workers enjoyed due to their elevated position in the Nazi racial hierarchy and the benefits individual foreign workers were able to secure by virtue of their employment skills, linguistic skills and greater confidence. In addition to the preferential treatment they enjoyed, other factors also served further to cement the advantages Belgians enjoyed. Many Belgians were able to secure better jobs because they were skilled workers. A high proportion of Belgians were employed in German industry, with jobs in the industrial sector, and in particular the armaments industry, paying higher wages. It has also been argued that language played a key role in shaping the experiences of many Belgian workers. As speakers of a Germanic language, Flemings often learned the German language more readily. A good command of German brought the ability to communicate with the German population and therefore helped foreign workers secure better jobs, as well as opportunities to improve their situation proactively by seeking out additional food or private accommodation. Packages sent by family members in Belgium and items that Belgians who returned home on leave brought back to Germany, including a wide array of foodstuffs, clothing, shoes and tobacco, supplemented their rations in Germany. Tobacco, in particular, provided Belgians with a high demand item that could be traded on the black market in Germany. For Germans with a spare room to rent western Europeans were a popular choice because they had access to goods unavailable in Germany.

This thesis has also emphasised the key role played by individual Germans in shaping the experiences of foreign workers. Looking at the question of the Nazis' distinguishing between Flemings and Walloons, there is little concrete evidence to confirm that their differing positions within the Nazi racial hierarchy brought substantive differences in their living and working conditions or the treatment they received at the hands of the German authorities. The examination of the sentences imposed by German judges, for example, provides no evidence to suggest that

Flemings and Walloons were treated differently. Indeed, social criteria were clearly more important than racial distinctions in determining the sentencing of Belgian offenders. Similarly, interactions between foreign workers and ordinary Germans were not necessarily influenced by Nazi racial policies. Nazi ideology was not all-pervasive and the reach of the Nazi authorities did not extend into the interactions between ordinary Germans and foreigners. Close contact between foreigners and Germans, in particular sexual relations between German women and foreign men, drew the attention of zealous *Gestapo* officers who often regarded all social contact between Germans and foreigners as morally unacceptable. This is not surprising given that Nazi propaganda lauded Germans as the master race. Many Germans, however, formed their own views about foreign workers and their own personal experiences helped dispel Nazi racial stereotypes. The approach adopted by individual Germans in their dealings with foreign workers was shaped by a complex range of factors including Nazi racial policies, past military conflicts, racial stereotyping, and personal experiences and in some cases genuine compassion. Fear of how their behaviour might be perceived by the Nazi authorities was also an influential factor, with some Germans eschewing close contact with foreign workers. Many Germans were in a position to assist foreign workers and helped in whatever ways they could because they saw foreigners as colleagues, fellow Christians or good workers; in shor, they recognised them as fellow human beings and treated them with decency.

By focussing on the social history of the *Ausländereinsatz* and the stories of individual Belgians, this thesis has mapped the varied experiences of Belgians in Germany during the Second World War, illustrating convergence and divergence from Nazi racial policy and the fundamental role ordinary Germans played. More importantly, however, this thesis has shown that Belgian civilian workers were not just passive victims of the German occupation of Belgium. In wartime, as in peacetime, the decision to go to Germany to work was often a personal one for Belgian volunteers, based on individual circumstances. In difficult economic times and with no end to the war in sight, Belgians sought to navigate the best course for themselves and their families and many probably felt that going to Germany to work represented the best way to secure their financial future – at least in the short term.

While Belgian conscripts were by definition not free, as western Europeans they were afforded greater rights and legal protection. Despite the difficulties they encountered, the privileged status Belgians enjoyed ensured that they had a great deal of room for manoeuvre and were able to exercise a significant degree of control over their own destinies.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: German Recruitment Offices

Main Office	Branches		Staff *all.*	Staff *ind.*
FK520 – Antwerp				
Antwerp			39	145
	Boom			6
	Herentals		1	6
	Mechelen		3	10
	Turnhout		6	5
OFK672 – Brabant				
Brussels			49	152
	Hasselt (FK681)		7	11
	Leuven		4	17
	Nivelles		5	12
OFK570 – Gent				
Gent			24	26
	Gent		8	46
	Aalst		3	11
	Oudenaarde		2	13
	Brugge		4	16
	Termonde		3	13
	Eecloo		2	9
	Kortrijk		6	17
	St. Nicolas		6	20
	Oostende		3	6
	Roeselare		4	11
	Tielt		2	5
	Veurne		3	6
	Ypres		3	11
OFK589 – Liège				
Liège			33	204
	Arlon		4	48
		Bastogne		
		Libramont		
		Marche		
	Huy		5	35
		Waremme		
	Verviers		6	44
		Stavelot		
OFK520 – Hainaut				
Mons			12	14
	Mons		6	17
	Charleroi		10	86
	Dinant		5	17
	La Louvière		4	14
	Namur		4	18
	Tournai		5	16

Source: Culot, "Le travail obligatoire des Belges", 14-5.

Appendix 2: Recruitment targets for 16.1.1943 – 24.4.1943

1. Registration of 18-25 year olds

	FK520 Antwerp	*OFK672 Brussels*	*OFK570 Gent*	*OFK589 Liège*	*OFK520 Mons*	*Total*
Proposed quota	80,000	130,000	140,000	60,000	90,000	500,000
1. Registered by the municipality:	67,384	98,154	119,709	61,683	66,657	413,587
2. Records compiled:	44,384	61,054	99,406	52,815	45,112	302,588
a. Metal workers	5,671	3,321	4,147	4,172	3,923	21,234
b. Semi-skilled workers	3,461	1,963	2,045	3,052	1,608	12,129
c. Construction workers	1,631	813	1,902	348	423	5,135
d. Other skilled workers	4,244	15,766	17,071	10,806	9,290	67,177
e. Independent workers (unemployed)	1,433	2,669	3,007	3,135	1,306	11,550
f. Unemployed	1,065	1,055	2,304	1,285	454	6,163
g. Students	4,827	5,311	6,879	5,266	4,682	26,965
h. Total records compiled	10,901	3,881	27,527	12,701	2,898	57,808
3. How many workers listed under 2. conscripted	7,671	15,251	21,793	5,077	8,390	58,182
as a percentage	17.3	25	21.9	9.6	18.6	19.2

2. Registration of agricultural businesses

	FK520 Antwerp	*OFK672 Brussels*	*OFK570 Gent*	*OFK589 Liège*	*OFK520 Mons*	*Total*
Participating Businesses	4,329	11,356	9,579	6,177	7,968	39,409
1. How many checked:	4,632	6,927	6,339	2,971	6,232	27,101
2. How many employees involved	21,867	12,380	9,084	3,382	7,961	54,674
3. How many for the Reich	2,218	1,357	1,857	655	1,052	7,139
4. How many for Belgium	1,706	3,624	962	742	2,127	9,161

3. Recruitment from the hospitality industry

	FK520 Antwerp	*OFK672 Brussels*	*OFK570 Gent*	*OFK589 Liège*	*OFK520 Mons*	*Total*
1. How many checked	2,307	1,965	1,113	1,131	1,634	8,150
2. How many employees involved	4,067	3,093	1,001	-	2,483	10,644
3. How many for German restaurants (*Gaststätte*)	730	973	408	217	151	2,479
4. How many for the Reich	192	166	164	114	318	954
5. How many for Belgium	373	269	9	63	199	913

Source: SVG/DO, R.184/Tr.37.023, Marburg Collection, 8/430-440 (1) (Film 12)

Appendix 3: Weekly recruitment quotas for each respective OFK/FK[1]			
	Overall Quota	*Area*	*Quota*
OFK672 Brussels	1,300	Greater Brussels	900
		Leuven	150
		Hasselt (Limburg)	150
		Nivelles	100
OFK 570Gent	1,400	Ghent	300
		Oostende	100
		Bruge	200
		Ronse	100
		St. Niklaas	150
		Dendermonde	100
		Aalst	100
		Kortrijk	150
		Roeselaere	200
FK520 Antwerp	900	Antwerp	500
		Mechelen	200
		Turnhout	200
OFK520 Mons	800	Mons	150
		Charleroi	200
		Tournai	150
		La Louvière	100
		Namur	100
		Dinant	100
OFK589 Liège	600	Liège	250
		Verviers	100
		Huy	100
		Arlon	150
Total:	5,000		

Source: SVG/DO, R.184/Tr.37.023, Marburg Collection, 8/430-440 (1) (Film 12)

[1] Issued 14.9.1943

Appendix 4: Belgian workers with contracts and Belgian workers in Germany		
Date	With labour contracts	In Germany
7 December 1940	90,423	
18 January 1941	100,000	
25 April 1941		86,349
20 August 1941	200,000	
15 January 1942	250,000	
20 January 1942		131,000
31 May 1942	300,376	
31 August 1942	325,235	
19 December 1942	398,270	
14 January 1943		250,000
20 May 1943	500,000	
July 1943		310,000
Autumn 1943		228,000
15 November 1943		220,621
1 December 1943	548,937	
Mid-August 1944	586,746	
Total number of workers repatriated to Belgium to May 1945	215,000	

Source: Haupt, "Der 'Arbeitseinsatz' der belgischen Bevölkerung", 82-5.

Appendix 5:	**Medical problems suffered by Belgian employees of Deutsche Werft Hamburg (1941-1945)**
Illness	*Number of reported cases*
Abdominal pains	2
Abrasion	10
Abscess	49
Adenitis	1
Adnexitis	2
Angina	47
Appendicitis	8
Arthritis	3
Asthma	2
Blisters (foot)	2
Blood disease	1
Bronchitis	38
Burns	30
Bursitis	2
Calloused skin	3
Carbuncle	9
Catarrh (sinuses)	1
Catarrh (upper respiratory tract)	2
Cell tissue infection	5
Chest pains	2
Circulatory disturbance	1
Clavus	1
Club feet	1
Colds	11
Colic	1
Colitis/enteritis/intestinal catarrh	21
Conjunctivitis	15
Contusion (bruising of various parts of the body)	99
Cuts	4
Cyst	1
Cystitis	4
Diarrhoea	5
Digestive problems	2
Diphtheria	7
Dislocation	1
Distraction	12
Dysmenorrhoea	1
Ear complaint	1
Ear infection	1

Eczema	11
Enteritis	11
Epididymitis	4
Excrescence (throat)	1
Eye complaint	4
Eye flashes	2
Eye injury	5
Eye irritation	1
Feverish illness	1
Foot complaint	2
Foot complaint (High foot arches)	2
Foreign body in eye	11
Fractures	14
Furuncle/boil	67
Gallstones	1
Gastritis	20
Gastroenteritis	19
Genital warts	1
Glandular infection	4
Gonorrhoea	1
Grastalgia (stomach ache)	1
'Grumbling appendix'	3
Haematoma	4
Haemorrhoids	5
Headache	4
Heart (valve defect)	1
Heart (weak)	1
Heart condition	4
Illness (nail)	1
Impetigo	2
Infected wound	4
Inflammation (various parts of body)	32
Influenza	146
Injury (various parts of body)	53
Jaundice	2
Keratitis	2
Kidney disease	1
Kidney stones	1
Laceration (head)	2
Laryngitis	1
Leg complaint	1
Leg injury	2
Leg wound	1
Lumbago (lower back pain)	26

Lung complaint	1
Lymphangitis	3
Middle ear infection	5
Miscarriage	1
Myalgia (muscle pain)	7
Nervous disorder/complaint	2
Neuralgia	2
Neuritis	1
Oedema	1
Omodynie	1
Pain	7
Panaritium	14
Pharyngitis	1
Pharyngeal catarrh	1
Phimosis	2
Phlegmon (various body parts)	9
Pleurisy	4
Plexus	1
Pneumonia	11
Pregnancy	4
Pulled muscle	2
Pulled tendon	2
Pyodermia	9
Rheumatism	12
Rupture	3
Scabies	10
Sciatica	6
Sebaceous cyst (head)	1
Sinusitis (maxillary)	1
Skin condition	1
Spasms (large intestine)	1
Spastic paralysis (hand)	1
Sprains	23
Stab wound	3
Stiff neck	1
Stomach complaint	1
Stomach flu	2
Stomach pains	11
Stomach ulcer	1
Sty	2
Swelling	2
Swollen glands	1
Syphilis	6
Tendovaginitis	2

Testicular pain	1
Throat catarrh	1
Throat flu	1
Throat infection	1
Thrombosis	2
Tonsillitis	11
Torticollis	1
Tracheitis	2
Tuberculosis	3
Ulcer (digestive system)	16
Ulcer (limbs)	12
Urticaria (hives)	1
Varicose veins	2
Warts (feet)	1
Wounds	24

Source: Author's statistics based on the company health insurance fund records for the Firma Deutsche Werft Hamburg: SVG/DO, R.219/Tr.26.686.

Appendix 6:	The distribution of foreign civilian and native workers across the economic sectors (August 1944)				
	Agriculture and Forestry %	Mining %	Industry %	Construction %	Service %
Belgians	2	1	72	10	14
Croatians	8	5	62	15	11
Czechs	5	5	58	16	17
Dutch	9	2	59	12	19
French	9	1	72	6	13
Italians	10	4	50	23	13
Poles	68	3	18	4	6
Serbians	15	8	51	8	17
Soviets	35	4	45	4	12
Foreigners	36	3	43	6	12
Total Workforce	18	4	42	5	32

Source: Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 225.

Appendix 7A: Comparison of male workers' previous professions and jobs undertaken in Germany

Name	*Previous profession*	*Profession (French or Flemish title)*	*Employment in Germany*	*Job title*	*Employer*	*Place of employment*
Frans A	Trader	Handelaar	Fitter	Monteur	W Siedler & Co.	Düsseldorf
Jean A	Carpenter		Carpenter	Zimmerer	Gott. Rotthof	Düsseldorf
Leonard A			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Firma Carl Zeiss	Jena, Thüringen
				Heizungshelfer	Firma Gebr. Reinartz, Baustellen Reichswerke Hermann Göring	Watenstedt
			Metal worker/repairer	Montagen, Schlosser	Firma Theodor Eickeler Zentral Heizung Sanitäranlage	Düsseldorf
Petrus A	Brickworks employee		Metal worker		Mannesmann Rohrenwerke	Düsseldorf
Emile A						Düsseldorf
			Unskilled worker	Ungelernter Arbeiter	Draalexander Wacker	Mückenberg, Arbeitsort Mückenberg
			Senior construction worker	Oberbauarbeiter	Deutsche Reichsbahn Direktion	Opladen
			Machinist	Maschinenarbeiter	Garbe Lahmeyer & Co	Düsseldorf
Gustavus A			Underground construction worker	Tiefbauarbeiter	JH Gustav Burmeister (Baumeister)	Hamburg
			Railway worker	Betriebsarbeiter	Reichsbahndirketion	Münster, Wilhelmshaven
			Senior construction worker	Oberbauarbeiter		Köln
Benjamin A	Factory worker		Metal worker	Schlosser	Bauleitung Dynamit AG	Bromberg, West Prussia
	Factory worker		Fitter	Monteur	Bauleitung Dynamit AG	Bromberg, West Prussia
François A	Interpreter/ magasinier		Worker	Arbeiter	Deutsche Reichsbahn	Düsseldorf

Name	*Previous profession*	*Profession (French or Flemish title)*	*Employment in Germany*	*Job title*	*Employer*	*Place of employment*
Carolus A	Bricklayer	Metser	Semi-skilled construction worker	Maurer (Hilfsarbeiter)	LAA Brandenburg	Brandenburg
	Bricklayer				Glashütte, Düsseldorf-Gerresheim	Düsseldorf
Jan Ae	Factory worker				Firma Kohn	Brunswick
					Firma AG Gerresheimer Glashüttenwerke	Düsseldorf
Jozef Franz A	Factory worker				Rheinische Rohrleitungsbau	Düsseldorf
Louis A			Semi-skilled construction worker	Bauhilfsarbeiter	Intendantur Wilhelmshaven – Fedderwardengroden	Wilhelmshaven
			Trainee railway worker	Anlerner	Erkner Anschlussgleis Wilhelmshagen, LAA Brandenburg	Berlin
					Geeresheimer Glashüttenwerke AG	Düsseldorf
Louis L A	Plasterer	Plafonneerder			Fa. Junkers Flugzeug- und Motorenwerke AG	Kassel, Bettenhausen
					Frontreparaturbetrieb Erla, Werk VI	Mechelen
			Construction worker (maintained buildings and ovens)	Maurer (entretien des batiments et fours)	Fa. Hiller und Müller	Düsseldorf
Josef A			Carpenter	Tischler	Stahl und Rohrenwerk Reisholz AG	Düsseldorf
					AA Breslau	Niederschleisien
Amandus A			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Henkel & Cie GmbH	Düsseldorf
Cornelius B				Elektro-Schweisser	Stettiner Oderwerke	Stettin
			Painter	Maler	T Schorn & Co	Düsseldorf
			Carpenter	Schreiner	T Schorn & Co	Düsseldorf

Name	*Previous profession*	*Profession (French or Flemish title)*	*Employment in Germany*	*Job title*	*Employer*	*Place of employment*
Antoine B	Coal hewer			Hauer	Ruhrbergbau	Gelsenkirchen
					Haniel und Lueg	Düsseldorf
Armand B	Quarry worker		Trainee/semi-skilled work	Anlerner/ Hilfsarbeiter	Kurbelwellenwerke	Hamburg
			Unskilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Fritz Kreums	Düsseldorf
Joseph B	Ship worker/ factory worker		Turner	Dreher	Howaldswerke	Düsseldorf
					Motorenwerke Augsburg	Nuremberg
Lodewijk B	Metal worker	Paswerker	Skilled metal worker	Ang. Metallarbeiter (Schlosser)	Potsdam	Brandenburg
Richard B	Factory worker		Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Motorenwerke	Hamburg
			Turner	Rev. Dreher	Nichaus & Luck	Düsseldorf
			Worker	Arbeiter	Maschinenfabrik Augsburg Nuernburg AG, Werk Hamburg	Hamburg
Jules Ch	Tram conductor	Percepteur de tram			Mannesmannröhren-Werke	Düsseldorf
Armand C	Skipper	Schipper	Worked with a skipper			Düsseldorf
Josef C	Peddler	Colporteur	Semi-skilled construction worker	Bauhilfsarbeiter		
			Carpenter	Zimmermann		
Louis C	Building labourer	Terrassier	Machinist	Maschinenarbeiter	Schäffer und Budenberg	Magdeburg
			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Deutsche Reichsbahn	Düsseldorf
Albert C	Unemployed prior to departure				Firma Gerresheimer Glashüttenwerke	Düsseldorf
Gustave M	Diamond worker/ cutter	Diamantbewerker			Firma L Hothland	Krefeld-Oppum
			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Mannesmannröhren-Werke	Düsseldorf
Gustave Me		Menuisier/boucher	Carpenter	Tischler	Bahnhof Köln-Deutz	Cologne

Name	*Previous profession*	*Profession (French or Flemish title)*	*Employment in Germany*	*Job title*	*Employer*	*Place of employment*
Alfred M		Modeleur	Carpenter	Modellschreiner		Düsseldorf
Sylvain M	Cobbler	Coordninnier				Düsseldorf/Magdeburg
Emiel S	Butcher/ boat-hand	Beenhouwer/ Schippersknecht	Apprentice metal worker	Metallbewerker op aluminium (Burcht)		Düsseldorf/Duisburg
Julius V			Apprentice mechanic		Undy-Werke GmbH, Frankfurt	Frankfurt aM
Marcel W			Excavation worker	Erdarbeiter	Bauleitung der Luftwaffe	Brake, Hannover
			Worker	Arbeiter	Magdeburg Strassenbahn	Magdeburg
					Firma Rheinische Bahngesellschaft	Düsseldorf
Lucien D	Goldsmith/ worker	Werkman				
Pierre D	Tramways employee	Recever aux tramways/ tramontvanger/ transbedienste, tramways bruxellois		Strassenbahn Handweiser	Rheinische Bahngesellschaft	Düsseldorf
			Conductor	Schaffner		Cologne
Roger F	Textile worker		Employed by Organisation Todt in France			
					Hermann Göring Werke	Most, Czechoslovakia
Frans G					Norddeutsche Affinerie	Hamburg
			Trainee		Firma Junkers	Dessau
			Trainee		"Sumag" Sudentenländischen Maschinen und Geräte Gesellschaft GmbH	Meretitz im Egertal (southern Germany)
					Stahl und Röhrenwerk Reisholz AG	Düsseldorf
						Zulich, Rheinland

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Henri G	Painter	Schilder			Rhein Metall Borsig	Berlin
			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Marquart	Beuel
					Stahl und Röhrenwerk Reisholz AG	Düsseldorf
					Firma Alfred Wirth & Co	Erkelenz
René H	Miner		Semi-skilled metal worker	Hilfsschlosser	Abstellbahnhof, Reichsbahn	Düsseldorf
Jan He	Stonemason	Steenbewerker	Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Bangert	Düsseldorf
					A Sergel	Hahndorf
Julius J	Builder (self-employed)	Metser	Iron painter	Eisenanstreicher	Müller und Bach, Siegener Grossanstreicher	Siegen
					Henkel & Cie GmbH	Düsseldorf
					E Röhren	Kassel
Gustaaf J	Brick maker				Papierfabriek Hermes	Düsseldorf
Willem J	Mechanic		Factory worker			Düsseldorf
Louis K	Factory worker				Firma Glanzstoff Courtaulds GmbH	Köln-Mehrheim Ifh
					Rheinische Rohrleitungsbau GmbH	Düsseldorf
Adrian L			Apprentice		Klöckner-Werke AG	Düsseldorf
Moritz L	Factory worker		Metal worker	Metallarbeiter	Firma Walzwerk Emil Nickel, Neviges	Cologne
			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Firma Vereinigte Stahlwerke Schrott und Handel	Düsseldorf
			Loading dock worker	Platzarbeiter	Firma Vereinigte Stahlwerke Schrott und Handel	Düsseldorf
Charles L	Turner	Tourneur	Metalworker			Düsseldorf & Kassel

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Jules L	Factory worker		Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Press- und Walzwerk	Düsseldorf
Leopold L	Metal worker		Semi-skilled worker	Maschinensteller/ Hilfsarbeiter	D Künne & Sohn	
Jakobus L	Factory worker		Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Lindemann & Schnitzler Düsseldorf	Düsseldorf
Roger M	Concreter/textile worker		Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Wilh. Berg, Altena (Westf.), Stahlbetten- und Matrazenfabrik, Zweigfabrik Düsseldorf-Oberkassel	Düsseldorf
Jules P	Builder		Construction worker			
			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Wilhelm Berg, Altena/Westfalen – Zweigfabrik Düsseldorf-Oberkassel	Düsseldorf
			Builder	Maurer	Firma Johann Ed. Birgel	Düren
			Builder	Maurer	Arbeitsgemeinschaft Otto	Augsburg
Jan P	Builder's labourer	Metsergast			Chemische Werke Albert, Wiesbaden-Biebrich	Wiesbaden
					Chemische Werke	Mainz
			Builder	Mauer	Firma Gottfried Nötges, Bauunternehmer	Düsseldorf
Raymond P	Factory worker		Underground construction worker	Tiefbauarbeiter	Ed. Dillenhöfer	Düsseldorf

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Ferdinand P	Butcher	Charcutier/Boucher	Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter/ Manoeuvre	Deutsche Reichsbahn	Düsseldorf
Marinus P	Turner/ metal worker	Tourneur/Izerdraaier				Düsseldorf
Gustave P	Cobbler	Schoenmaker	Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Vereinigte Glanzstoff Fabriken AG	Obernburg aM
Petrus P	Building labourer	Terrassier				Bremen
Johannes R	Dockworker	Dokwerker	Semi-skilled construction worker	Bauhilfsarbeiter	Braunkohle-Bezine Werk	Böhlen
			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Dillenberg & Co	Düsseldorf
Albert R	Construction worker	O/chantier			Klöckner Werke AG	Düsseldorf
Victor R	Polisher	Polisseur		Eisendreher		
			Worker	Arbeiter		Wilhelmshaven
Domenique T	Day labourer	Journalier	Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Sächische Gutzstahlwerke	
			Worker	Arbeiter	Herman Kleinfeld	Düsseldorf
René B	Carpenter	Schrijnwerker	Factory worker			Düsseldorf
Petrus B	Concreter	Betonarbeider	Farmhand	Landwirtschaft Gehilfe	Abendioth	Wanne Eickel, Rhineland
Jan E	Factory worker (silver factory)		Factory worker		Paper factory	
Balthasar P	Factory worker					Düsseldorf
Frans Ge	Day labourer	Daglooner			Stahl- und Röhrenwerke AG	Düsseldorf
					Firma Altenloh, Brinck & Co GmbH	Milspe
August M	Metal worker/ dockworker	Schlosser/Dokwerker	Metal worker	Schlosser	Baumaschinenfabrik Bünger AG	Düsseldorf

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August O	Factory worker				Washing powder factory	Erfurt
				Textile factory worker	Kunstseidefabriek	Krefeld
			Transport worker	Transporteur (23a5 = Hilfsarbeiter)	Matthes Fischer Werke (Blechenballagen)	Düsseldorf
Albrecht O	Heating fitter/ metal worker	Monteur Chauffage	Organisation Todt employee		Südbau GmbH	Bremen, Hannover, Düsseldorf
Petrus R	Plasterer	Plafonneerder	Plasterer	Stuckateur	Emil Hinker	Düsseldorf
Alfons W	Factory worker		Metal worker			Schönebeck/Elbe & later in Düsseldorf
Jean Va	Tiler	Vloerleger/ Fliesenleger	Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Organisation Todt	Oberhausen
Louis V			Construction worker	Bauarbeiter	Hans Schlaadt, Bauunternehmung	Düsseldorf
Albert V	Printer		Handsetter	Handsetzer	Droeste Verlag der Mittag	Düsseldorf
					Ehrenreich & Cie	Düsseldorf
Louis W	Dockworker	Havenarbeider	Skilled worker	Angelernte Arbeiter	RAX Werke	Vienna
			Mining worker		Gelsenkirchen Bergwerks AG, Zeche Pluto/Wanne Eickel	Ruhr
					Papierfabrik Hermes & Cie	Düsseldorf
Paul A	Decorator/ wallpaperer	Behanger	Unskilled worker	Ungelernte Arbeiter	AG Karger	Berlin
Carolus B	Electrician		Electrician		Argus Motoren	Berlin
			Electrician		Firma Bergman, Elektrizitätswerke, Berlin-Wihlelmsruh	Berlin
			Electrician	Schwachstrom Monteur	Telefunken GmbH, Gefolgschaftsabteilung L	Berlin

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Roger Be			Senior construction worker	Oberbauarbeiter	Reichsbahndirektion Hannover	Hannover
				Hausdiener	Hotelbetriebs AG	Berlin
Alexandre B	Printer	Imprimeur	Worker	Betriebsarbeiter	Reichsbahnsdirektion Berlin	Berlin
			Printer	Drücker	Kr. Karton u. Verm. Amt	Berlin
Leopold B	Presser (paper manufacturing)		Office cleaner		Deutsche Reichsbahn, Bahnbetriebswerk Berlin-Tempelhof	Berlin
Marcel B	Previously employed as a loading worker at brick work (unemployed)	Manoeuvre	Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Ziegelei Hückelsmay	Krefeld
Leon B	Coal miner/ concreter/ press operator	Houillier/ Betonneur/ presseur	Unskilled worker/ iron worker	Ungelernte Arbeiter/ Eisenarbeiter	Philip Holzmann – Dükirhoff	Berlin
Gabriel B			Construction worker	Bauarbeiter/ Arbeiter	Firma Ludwig Specht Eisenbahn Hoch- und Tiefbau	Berlin
Leo B	Diamond worker/ cutter	Diamantbewerker		Quarzschleifer	Telefunken Gesellschaft	Berlin
Hieronimus B	Textile worker	Laineur	Trainee	Anlernkraft	AA Berlin	Berlin
Frans B	Dockworker	Dokwerker	Trainee	Anlerner (Dural Härter)	Elektrom Co	Berlin
Jan B	Railway/ tramways worker	Tramwaybediende	Goods worker	Guterbodenarbeiter		Berlin
Joannes B	Warehouseman	Magazijnier	Mechanic			Berlin
Ludowicus B	Warehouseman	Magazijnier	Metal worker		Mauserwerke Deutschland Brandenburg	Berlin
					Firma AG Weser	Bremen
			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Rudolf Ribeke	Berlin

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Gaspard B	Baker	Bäcker	Baker	Bäcker	Bäckerinnung Berlin	Berlin
Roger C	Tailor	Tailleur de prierres à Allain			Ateliers Sukol Berlin-Luckenwalde	Berlin
Hippolyte C	Manual worker/ assistant electrician	Handwerker/ hulpelektriker	Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Beton & Monierbau	Mannheim
			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Nordkabel	Berlin
			Agricultural worker	Landarbeiter	Pfeil, Amlishagen	Crailsheim
Leo C	Painter	Verver	Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Norddeutsche Kabelwerke	Berlin
			Worker	Arbeiter	Heinrich Glissmann, Berlin NW	Berlin
Pierre Co			Worker	Arbeiter	Deutsche Reichsbahn Direktion	Berlin
Frans C	Worker		Semi-skilled worker/ checker	Hilfsarbeiter/ Prüfer	Firma C Lorenz AG	Berlin
Joannes C	Textile worker			Schleifer	Firma C Lorenz AG	Berlin
Mauritus C	Forestry worker		Trainee	Umschuler	Junkers Flugzeug- und Motorenwerke AG, Magdeburg, Neustadt	Magdeburg
			Turner	Dreher	Firma Erich & Graetz AG, Berlin-Treptow, SO, Elsenstr. 90-96	Berlin
					Firma Erich & Graetz AG, Betrieb Lunzenau a/Mulde, Kreis Rochlitz, Sachsen	
					Reichswerke Hermann Goering	Watenstedt
René C	Chauffeur			Schleifer/Fräser	Firma Erich & Graetz AG	Berlin
						Bregenz, Voralberg, Austria
						Magdeburg

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Clément C			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter/ Betriebsarbeiter	Reichsbahndirektion Berlin	Berlin
			Trainee	Umschuler/ Bauschlosser	Gottschalk & Michaelis – Maschinenfabrik	Berlin
Adolphe C	Mechanic		Metal worker/ fitter	Ajusteur/ Monteur/ Montageschlosser	Innung des Kraftfahrzeugwerks, Berlin	Berlin
Paul C	Carpenter	Timmerman	Carpenter	Zimmermann	Friedrich P Stolze	Hamburg
			Carpenter	Zimmermann	Heuer, Holz-Hallen, Neudamm	Berlin
Remi C	Carpenter	Charpentier	Carpenter	Zimmermann		
Gustaaf B	Electrician		Metal worker	Lasscher/ Schweisser/ Schlosser	Deutsche Reichsbahn Berlin/ RAW Eberswalde	Berlin
			Builder	Maurer	Friedrich Krieg Söhne, Baugesellschaft Nürtingen	
Oskar B	Metal worker	Schlosser	Metal worker	Schlosser	Deutsche Reichsbahn, Berlin-Tempelhof RAW	Berlin
Victor D	Dockworker	Dokwerker	Concreter	Betonarbeiter	Hermann Hauf, Generalbauinspektor für die Reichshauptstadt Berlin	Berlin
Marcel Co	Mechanic/ carpenter/ chauffeur	Autovoerder/ timmerman	Mechanic	Mekaniker		
Achille H	Errand boy	Garcon des courses	Camp worker	Lagerarbeiter		
			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter / Hilfsmekaniker	Siemens Schuckertwerke	Berlin
			Unskilled worker	Ungelernte Arbeiter	Torlit-Werke AG, Halske & Co	Bremen, Hemelingen
Albrecht J					A Jackenroll Optische Anstalt, Berlin SO	Berlin
Lucien M	Fitter/ glazier	Monteur/ Vitrier	Machinist	Maschinen Arbeiter	Bergmann Elektrizitätswerke AG, Berlin-Wilhelmsruh	Berlin

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Frans P	Agricultural worker	Landbouwersknecht	Unskilled worker	Ungelernter Arbeiter	Gummiwerkenfabriek	Potsdam
Alfons S	Textile worker	Katoenbewerker	Boiler maker	Kesselschmied	Deutsche Reichsbahn RAW, Berlin-Tempelhof	Berlin
Joseph S	Agricultural worker	Menusier				Berlin
Jan V	Mechanic/career soldier	Ajusteur/ mécanicien/ militaire de carrière	Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Potsdam Anschluss GI, Lager Rehbrücke	Berlin
Pierre V	Loading worker	Manoeuvre	Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Firma C Lorenz AG, Berlin	Berlin
François Vo	Plumber	Loodkapper-gieter/ Afkapper	Manual worker	Arbeiter/ Handarbeiter	Siemens Schuckertwerke AG	Berlin
Louis Wi	Plumber	Loodgieter	Plumber	Klempner		Berlin
					Gooliotsch & Co.	Tachau, Sudentenland
Lucien De			Typesetter	Handsetzer	Wirtschaftsgruppe Druck Berlin	Berlin
Andreas D	Printer	Drukker	Worked on camouflage material	Arbeiter 23b/ Arbeiter auf Tarnmaterial	Ernst Rappe & Hecht, Berlin-Reinickendorf	Berlin
Arthur D			Metal worker	Schlosser	Norddeutsche Kabelwerke	Berlin
Hubert D	Metal worker	Paswerker/ soudeur/ autogeenlasscher	Metal worker	Schlosser/ Schweisser		
					Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft (AEG)	Berlin
Theofiel D	Mechanic/chauffeur					
Raoul D	Previously employed as a metal worker at ACEC. Self-employed as a watchmaker/ repairer at the time that he went to Germany.	Ajusteur/ Horloger	Precision mechanic	Feinmechaniker	Siemens	Berlin

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Oscar D	Agricultural worker		Shunter	Rangierarbeiter	Reichsbahndirektion Berlin	
Jean Baptise D	Welder	Tollier/ zoudeur	Panel beater/welder	Spengler/ Schweisser	Fahrzeugfabrik	Berlin
Robert D	Metal worker	Ajusteur	Mining worker	Hüttenarbeiter	Stahlwerke Braunschweig GmbH	Watenstedt
			Metal worker	Schlosser		Berlin
Raphaël D	Barber	Coiffeur	Semi-skilled worker (barber)	Hilfsarbeiter (Friseur)		Berlin-Teltow
Maurice D	Tailor		Semi-skilled worker	Handlanger/ Hilfsarbeiter	Gaubschat Fahrzeugwerke GmbH	Berlin
			Semi-skilled worker	Handlanger/Hilfsarbeiter	Gebrüders Martin (textile factory)	Thuringia
Norbert D			Semi-skilled construction worker	Bauhilfsarbeiter	Generalbauinspektor für die Reichshauptstadt Berlin	Berlin
			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	JC Martini	Thuringia
						Osteinsatz/ Schutz Kommando OT Leitstelle Brussels
Frans D	Electrician		Roofer	Dachdecker	Generalinspector für die Reichshauptstadt Berlin	Berlin
			Trainee	Umschuler	Junkers Flugzeug und Motorenwerke	Dessau
			Semi-skilled electrician	Hilfseletriker		
Ernestus D	Metal worker	Plooier			Deutsche Reichsbahn RAW Berlin-Tempelhof	Berlin
Georges D	Mechanic		Metal worker	Schlosser		Berlin
Gustave D	Travelling salesman/ bookbinder	Handelreisender/ Relieure	Trainee	Arbeiter zur anlernen/ Hilfsarbeiter	Gottschalk & Michaelis	Berlin

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Maurice Do			Turner	Dreher		Berlin
Andreas Dr	Printer	Drukker		Handlanger		Berlin
Aldo F			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Firma Berger	Berlin
			Semi-skilled worker/ carpenter	Hilfsarbeiter/ Zimmermann	Firma Karl Albrecht, Berlin-Neukölln	Berlin
Louis F			Worker	Arbeiter		Berlin
Roger Fr	Metal worker	Paswerker	Metal worker	Schlosser		Berlin
Georges G			Construction worker	Mauer	Kurt Pietz, Bauausführungen	Berlin
Alfons G	Tailor	Kleermakker	Worker	Arbeiter		Berlin
Pieter G	Tailor	Kleermakker				Berlin
Leon G	Motor mechanic					Berlin
Gabriel G			Metal worker	Motorenschlosser	Deutsche Reichsbahn – Ausbesserungswerk Tempelhof	Berlin
Samuel G			Factory worker	Betriebsarbeiter	Deutsche Reichsbahn	Berlin
August G			Semi-skilled turner	Hilfsdreher	Siemens Planiawerke AG, Berlin-Lichtenberg	Berlin
Marcel G	Technical draughtsman		Technical draughtsman	Techniker Zeichner	Weser Flugzeugbaugesellschaft	Berlin
Jean H	Turner	Ouvrier tourneur			Knorr Bremse AG	Berlin
Emile H	Factory worker		Construction worker	Bauarbeiter	Rustungsausbau des Reichsministerium Flakturm Hamburg	Berlin
	Factory worker				Klöckner AG – Werk Osnabrück	Berlin
Jules H			Construction worker		Max Schwarz Hochbau- und Holzbau, Berlin-Frohnau	Berlin

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Roger H	Metal worker	Paswerker/ Ajusteur	Fitter	Monteur	Deutsche Hollerieth Maschinen GmbH Berlin, Werk Berlin AG	Berlin
Adolf J			Carpenter	Zimmermann		Berlin
Theophil J			Carpenter	Zimmermann	Becker & Heuer Baugestellschaft für Hoch-, Tief- und Eisenbetonbau, Berlin-Charlottenburg	Berlin
André J	Metal worker	Ajusteur	Metal worker	Schlosser	Rhein Metall Borsig	Berlin
Alfred H			Transport worker	Transportarbeiter	Hedwigshütte AG, Berlin-Zehlendorf	Berlin
Emil K	Horticulturalist	Tuinbouwkundige	Semi-skilled worker/ Worker	Hilfsarbeiter/ Arbeiter	Firma C Lorenz AG	Berlin
Hugo K	Trainee horticulturalist	Leerling hovenier	Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Firma C Lorenz AG	Berlin
Petrus K	Painter	Schilder			Univ. Film AKF	Berlin
Gustaaf K	Cloth weaver	Jutewever	Carpenter	Zimmerer	Bernard Frericks	Berlin
Moritz K	Weaver					Berlin
Anton K	Trainee cobbler	Cordonnier/ Scholier nu schoenmaker	Driver	Kraftfahrer	Heidelberg Reserve Lazarett	Heidelberg
					Daimler-Benz Motoren GmbH, Genshagen, Kreis Teltow	Berlin
Gustaaf Ki	White-collar worker (Customs)/ Book-keeper	Bediende/ Douane/ Boekhouder	Unskilled worker/ postal delivery driver	Ungelernte Arbeiter/ Postkraftfahrer	Deutsche Reichspost Reichpostdirektion	Berlin
Olivier L	Miner/ carpenter/ fitter	Houilleur/ Monteur & charpente	Transport worker	Transportarbeiter	Bergmanns Elektrizitätwerke	
Jan L	Unskilled worker/ Tramways worker	Tramontvanger/ Trambediende		BUA	Reichsbahn	Berlin
Camiel L			Concreter	Betonarbeiter	Generalbauinspektor Berlin	Berlin

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Victor L	Transport worker/ weaver	Verver	Worker	Arbeiter	CK Knorr GmbH	Berlin
Arthur L				Lagerist		Berlin
Louis Li			Unskilled worker	Ungelernter Arbeiter	Deutsche Reichspost	Berlin
Hendrik L	Carpenter	Timmerman		Zimmerer	Deutsche Hydrierwerke	Bodleben
			Metal worker	Schlosser	Daimler-Benz Motoren GmbH, Genshagen, Kreis Teltow	Berlin
Franz L	Student at a trade school		Trainee	Lehrling/ Bursche	Rudolf Ribeke	
Jacob M			Electro mechanic/ fitter	Elektromonteur	Rudolf Ribeke	Berlin
Karl M			Construction worker	Baugeschäft		Berlin
Edmondus M	Metal plater	Vernikkelaar	Factory worker	Betriebsarbeiter	IG Farben/ Fressler-Schröder Chemische Fabrik	Premnitz
	Locksmith	Serrurier	Worker	Arbeiter	Deutsche Reichsbahndirection Berlin	Berlin
Julien M	Electrician					
Eduard M	Metal worker	Schlosser				
Roger Mo			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Gaubschat Fahrzeugwerke GmbH	Berlin
			Skill	Angl. Arbeiter		Berlin
François N	Mechanic		Senior construction worker	Oberbauarbeiter	Max Berger, Eisenbahn und Tiefbaugesellschaft, Berlin-Charlottenburg	Berlin
			Concreter	Betonarbeiter	Gebrüder Giulini GmbH	Ludwigshafen
					Firma Rautenbach Solingen	Solingen
Guillaume N			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter		Berlin

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Jean N			Worker	Arbeiter	Max Berger, Eisenbahn und Tiefbauges., Berlin-Charlottenburg	Berlin
Leon N	Dockworker				Oberbürgermeister der Reichshauptstadt Berlin	Berlin
François R	Photographer		Metal worker		Hydrierwerk AG	Scholven, Gelsenkirchen
			Assistant fitter	Hilfsmonteur	Sudentenland Treibstoff	Prux Malthessen, Sudentenland
			Photographer	Photographen	Buchdruckwerkstätte	Berlin
					Usines d'essence synthétique Herman Göring a Most (Anc. Brux) Tschécoslovaque	Czechoslovakia
Robert R			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Siemens Schuckert Werke	Berlin
Joseph R			Worker	Arbeiter	Probably Norddeutsche Kabelwerke	Berlin
Gustave R	Baker		Baker's assistant	Bäckergeselle	Paul Wernitz, Bäcker und Konditorei	Berlin
Eduard S					Daimler Benz Berlin	Berlin
Marcel S	Carpenter	Timmermann/ Houtbewerker	Metal worker/ carpenter	Schlosser/ Timmermann		Berlin
Jean S	Electrician	Elektriker			AEG	Berlin
					Hn. Otto Erla Werk Flugplatz Brustem	Leipzig

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Maurice T	Warehouseman	Magasijnier			Reichswerke Hermann Göring, Watenstedt	Watenstedt
						Berlin
						Cologne
			Agricultural worker	Landwirtschaft. Arbeiter	H Engels	Langel
Marcel T			Unskilled worker	Ungelernter Arbeiter	Firma C Lorenz AG	Berlin
				R. Arbeiter	Firma C Lorenz AG	Berlin
Georges T	Hairdresser		Unskilled worker	Ungelernter Arbeiter	Firma C Lorenz AG	Berlin
			Worker	Arbeiter	Telefunken	Berlin
			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Willy de Meyer Metallwerkenfabrik, Berlin SO 36	Berlin
Marcel Th			Transport worker	Transportarbeiter		
			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter/ Manoeuvre	Askania Werke, Berlin-Wilmersdorf	Berlin
André T	Lithographer, also worker in a glass factory		Transport worker	Transportarbeiter		Berlin
			Worker	Arbeiter	Opta Radio AG	Berlin
Albert T	Chauffeur		Worker	Arbeiter/ Böhrer		Berlin
					Bergwerkgesellschaft Georg von Giesche, Erbenhuttenverwaltung Magdeburg	Magdeburg

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Raymond T	Factory worker		Factory worker	Fabrikarbeiter	Beton und Tiefbau Mast AG	Brandenburg
					E Börner, Tief- und Eisenbahnbau, Berlin-Wilmersdorf	Berlin
Jules T	Typesetter	Lettersetter	Unskilled worker	Ungelernter Arbeiter	Firma C Lorenz AG, Berlin-Tempelhof	Berlin
			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Schlesische Zellwolle am Hirschberg	Hirschberg, Schlesien
Jean Bel	Trainee metal worker	Metallhilfer Jung.			Gewerkschaft Elwerth Erdölwerken	Neuhagen
	Turner/ manual worker	Tourneur/ Handarbeiter	Assistant mechanic	Betriebsarbeiter/ Hilfsmechaniker	Deutsche Reichsbahn	Berlin
Karel B			Metal worker	Schlosser/ Fräser (Ungelernte)	Arado Flugzeugwerke	Brandenburg
Petrus A B	Factory worker/ mechanic (employed in the food production industry prior to going to Germany)		Machinist		Maschinenarbeiter	
Jan A	Worker at a tile factory	Pannenbewerker (werkman)				
Jules Li	Factory worker		Semi-skilled construction worker	Bauhilfsarbeiter	(Unknown) construction firm/ Berlin Generalbauinspektion für der Reichshauptstadt	Berlin
			Textile worker/ weaver (wool)	Weber (Wolle)	Vereinigte Glanzstoff Fabrik AG	Elsterberg, Sachsen
					Gaubschat Fahrzeugwerke, Berlin-Neukölln	Berlin

Name	*Previous profession*	*Profession (French or Flemish title)*	*Employment in Germany*	*Job title*	*Employer*	*Place of employment*
Cornelius E	Mechanic	Autovoerder	Delivery driver	Einschaler/ Kraftfahrer	IG Farben	Frankfurt-Höchst
			Delivery driver	Kraftfahrer für Lastkraftwag.	Hans Engelke Kohlengrosshandlung	Berlin
August H	Technical draughtsman		Technical draughtsman	Technische Zeichner	AEG KWO	Berlin
Adolf I	Builder	Metser	Builder	Maurer	Richard Lange, Gros-Glienicke	Berlin
Frans I				Erdarbeiter		Berlin
Richard I			Construction worker	Mauer	Carl Hans Riedel, Baugeschäft, Berlin-Neukölln	Berlin
Josef L	Metal worker		Skilled worker	Angelernter Arbeiter	Daimler Benz AG, Berlin-Marienfelde	Berlin
Jan M	Metal worker	Polisseur/ Nikkelwerker	Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	AEG	Berlin
Jan S	Fitter/ Fishmonger	Monteur/ vischhandelaar	Unskilled worker	Ungelernter Arbeiter	Firma C Lorenz AG	Berlin
						Halberstadt
Jean V	Bricklayer (unemployed before going to Germany)		Unskilled worker	Ungelernter Arbeiter		Brandenburg
			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Otto Schmidt Ingenieur	Berlin
Joris V	Carpenter	Charpentier/ Meubelbedrijf	Carpenter	Schrijnwerker		Berlin
Robert V			Trainee/assistant toolmaker	Anlerner/ Hilfswerkzeug-macher	Dreilinden Maschinenbau Kleinmachnow, Teltow	Berlin

Name	*Previous profession*	*Profession (French or Flemish title)*	*Employment in Germany*	*Job title*	*Employer*	*Place of employment*
Jean Van	Miner				Norddeutsche Kabelwerke AG, Berlin-Neukölln	Berlin
			Metal worker	Arbeiter (Walzwerk)	Vereinigte Leichtmetall-Werke GmbH, Hannover	Hannover
Gerard V	Metal worker / fitter	Paswerker/ Monteur			Firma Julius Pintsch	Berlin
						Leipzig
Gerard Ve			Factory worker	Fabrikarbeiter		Berlin
Emil V			Underground construction worker	Tiefbauarbeiter	G Walter, Berlin-Köpernick	Berlin
Franziskus V	Dock worker	Hafenarbeiter			Deutsche Reichspost	Berlin
Marcel Br	Office worker		Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Friedrich Krupp Gusonwerke AG	Magdeburg
Gustave B	Tailor		Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	FA Lange Metallwerke AG	Marienburg
			Workplace representative	Verbindungsmann	FA Lange Metallwerke AG	Marienburg

Source: Data taken from individual files at SVG/DO.

Appendix 7B: Comparison of female workers' previous professions and jobs undertaken in Germany

Name	*Previous profession*	*Profession (French or Flemish title)*	*Employer in Belgium*	*Employment in Germany*	*Job title*	*Employer*	*Place of employment*
Emilia A	Factory worker			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	Henkel & Cie GmbH	Düsseldorf
Anna Be				Apprentice	Schulerin	Lubke Berlin-Helensee, Rektors	Berlin
				Assistant worker	Hilfskraft	Henkel & Cie GmbH	Düsseldorf
Marie-Jeanne B				Employed at children's home		Kinderheim Schalkmühle	Altena, Westfalen
Constantia B				Washer woman/ seamstress	Wäschennäherin		Berlin
Fanny B	Textile worker	Spinster		Worker	Arbeiterin	Siemens SchuckertwerkeBerlin Siemensstadt	Berlin
Marie-José B				Agricultural worker	Service agricole		
Andrée B				Worker	Arbeiter	Firma Telefunken	Berlin
Jeanne C	Textile worker	Machinenbreister	Eeckhout Louis, Robert, Gentbrugge	Factory worker		Süddeutsche Apparate Fabrik GmbH	Nuremberg
Clémentine D	Seamstress			Worker	Arbeiter	Wintershall AG Spritzgusswerk "Fusor"	Berlin
Vitaline B	Servant		Private household				
Andrienne B	Servant	Servante		Kitchenhand/ waitress	Küchengehilfin/ Kellnerin oder Servierin in Konditorei		
			Housemaid	Hausmädchen			
						Siemens	Berlin

Name	*Previous profession*	*Profession (French or Flemish title)*	*Employer in Belgium*	*Employment in Germany*	*Job title*	*Employer*	*Place of employment*
Madeleine B	Textile worker		SA Usines Cottonières de Belgique				Stuttgart Nord
Georgette B	Dressmaker	Kleermaker		Machinist	Maschinen Arbeiter		
Marie-Louise B	Factory worker						
Henriette B	Textile worker		Spinnerij van Staden			JP Bernburg, Wuppertal/ Köthen	
Julienne C	Textile worker		SA Linère de Courtrai (spinning mill)	Worker	Arbeiter		
Marie-Louise C	Cleaning lady/ childcare assistant	Werkvrouw/ helpster in kinderpensionen		Worker	Arbeiterin	Gebrüders Merckx Pharmaceutiek	Darmstadt
Gabriella D	Seamstress	Naaister	Blanchisserie de Courtrai	Worker	Arbeiter		
Irma J						Firma J Schnitzler	Konstanz
Marie L							
Mariette L	Waitress			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter	LAA Hessen/ AA Offenbach	
Madeleine L	Violinist		Chamber orchestra	Violinist / semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiterin	Lyssia-Werke, Wiesbaden	Stadt Kurorchester
Marcella P				Weaver		Spinnerei & Weberei H Kettelbach	Mesum
Yvonne P	Sales assistant		De Grote Bazaar van Antwerp	Worker	Arbeiterin	Robert Karstens	Berlin
Madeleine R							
Celestina R	Factory worker			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiterin	EIBIA, Leipzig	
Anna R	Factory worker/ textile worker	Strikster	Bonneterie Bosteels-De Smeth, Aalst	Seamstress/ factory worker	Näherin/ werkman	Rogo-Werke Robert Götze, Oberlungswitz	

Name	*Previous profession*	*Profession (French or Flemish title)*	*Employer in Belgium*	*Employment in Germany*	*Job title*	*Employer*	*Place of employment*
Laura R				Housemaid	Hausgehilfin		Stadtkreis Landshut
							Berlin
Maria R							
Elvire R	Hospitality worker/ kitchenhand			Waitress, housemaid		Gaststätte	
Martha S	Factory worker						
Germaine S	Textile worker		Vereenigde Gentse Spinnerijen, Gent			Metallguß Böhlitz, Ehrenburg	
Martha Sm	Weaver			Weaver/ skilled worker	Weber/ Facharbeiterin		
Valentina S	Textile industry/factory worker	Breister/ fabriekwerkster	Bonneterie Bosteels-De Smeth, Aalst	Textile worker	Strickerin/ Arbeiterin	Rogo-Werke Robert Götze, Oberlungswitz	
Anna S	Factory worker		SA Fabelta, Tragel Aalst	Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiterin	Eibia GmbH, Dörverden	
Clementina V						Junkers Flugzeug- und Motorenwerk AG/ Spinnerei Blutchen, Vetchau	Stasfurt, Leopoldshal
Magdalena V	Factory worker					(probably Junkers Flugzeug- und Motorenbau)	Köthen
Germaine W	Employed at a flax mill		Ets Baertson & Buysse (vlaspinnerij), Gent	Worker	Werkman	Junkers Flugzeug- und Motorenbau	Magdeburg
Emma W	Textile worker	(Wol)weefster					
Palmyre W	Factory worker/ textile worker	Fabriekwerkster/ bobjijnster	SA Fabelta, Tragel Aalst	Semi-skilled worker	Werkman/ Hilfsarbeiterin	Eibia GmbH, Dörverden	
Josephina W			De Beukelaers Fabrieken, Antwerp			Rheinmetal Borsig AG	Sömmerda, near Erfurt

Name	*Previous profession*	*Profession (French or Flemish title)*	*Employer in Belgium*	*Employment in Germany*	*Job title*	*Employer*	*Place of employment*
Yvonne W	Farm worker, textile worker			Worker	Arbeiterin		
Delphina D							
Jeanne D						Clausthal-Zellefeld, chemical factory at Clausthal, later part of Dynamit Nobel AG	Clausthal, Harz Mountains
Nelly D	Seamstress	Näherin		Worker	Arbeiterin	Mauserwerke Berlin-Borsigwalder	Berlin
				Waitress/ prostitute	Kellnerin, Bordell		Berlin
Mathilde D				Seamstress	Näherin	M&H Winkler, Beruf- und Sportkleiderfabrik	Stuttgart
Joanna D	Employee at life insurance firm		Antverpia Lebensverzekering en-Maatschappij, Ekeren	White-collar worker	Angestellter	Brown-Boveri, Mannheim	
Madeleine J						Henkel GmbH	
Joanna De						Stöhr Karngarnspinnerei	Leipzig (first labour assignment)
							Köhl Dresden (second labour assignment)
Mariette D	Waitress			Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiter		Wiesbaden
Elisabeth D	Servant	Meid	Zwingedouw Papestre Kortrijk			Phillips	Aachen
Irena D	Worker at a cigar factory.		Sigarrenmaakster, Schaerbeek	Factory worker		Junkers Flugzeug- und Motorenwerke	Madgeburg
Thérèse D	Factory worker		Société Belge pour la Fabrication des Cables et Fils Electriques SA, Buizingen				

Name	*Previous profession*	*Profession (French or Flemish title)*	*Employer in Belgium*	*Employment in Germany*	*Job title*	*Employer*	*Place of employment*
Maria H	Housekeeper	Huishoudster					
Suzanne D	Waitress	Serveuse		Worker/ Machinist	Arbeiterin/ Masch. Arbeiterin	Siemens & Halske	Berlin
Pauline D	Textile worker					Junkers Flugzeug- und Motorenwerke	Dessau
Estelle D	Worker				Arbeiterin		Teltow/ Brandenburg
Simone D			Usine Union SA (manufacturer of metal and celluloid articles)			Schott & Gen.	Jena
Elodie D	Draftsperson	Dessinatrice					
Pauline H				Worker	Arbeiterin	Firma C Lorenz AG	Berlin
Amélie E				Worker	Arbeiterin	Märkische Apparatenfabrik	Berlin
Lucie E	Shop assistant/ waitress	Winkeljuffer					Dremmen, near Aachen/ Berlin
Georgine F				Worker	Arbeiterin/ Manoeuvre	Siemens Schuckertwerke, Berlin Siemensstadt	Berlin
Jacqueline G				Worker	Arbeiterin		Berlin
Bertha G	Cashier	Caissieuse					
Jeanne G	Sales assistant	Vendeuse	Magasin Sarma, Namur	Machinist/ semi-skilled worker	Maschinenarbeiterin/ Hilfsarbeiterin		
Denise G	Nursing student	Étudiante infirmiere		Translator	Dolmetscherin	Postamt	Berlin
Joanna G			Bell Telephone, Antwerp	Factory worker	Arbeiterin	Tachometer	Frankfurt aM
Wilhelmina G	Factory worker		Bell Telephone, Antwerp, General Drinks	Canteen assistant	Kantinenhilfe	Hermann Schneider factory	Gera
Aloysia H							

Name	*Previous profession*	*Profession (French or Flemish title)*	*Employer in Belgium*	*Employment in Germany*	*Job title*	*Employer*	*Place of employment*
Florentina H				Worker/ translator	Arbeiterin/ Dolmetscherin	Siemens Schuckertwerke, Berlin Siemensstadt	Berlin
Augustina K	Housewife					Firma C. Lorenz Berlin AG	Berlin
Jeanne K					Montierorin		Berlin
Maria K	Hairdresser	Coiffeuse		Worker	Arbeiter		Braunschweig
				Worker	Arbeiterin		Berlin
Hélène L				Worker	Arbeiterin	Siemens Schuckertwerke, Berlin Siemensstadt	Berlin
Julia L				Office cleaner	Büroputzer	Firma Press und Walzwerk AG	Düsseldorf
Antoinette L	Factory worker			Servant	Hausgehilfin	Siemens Schuckertwerke, Berlin Siemensstadt	Westfalen
				Worker	Handarbeiterin	Siemens Schuckertwerke AG, Kabelwerk, Berlin-Siemensstadt	Berlin
				Controller/ manual worker	Kontrollierin/ Handarbeiter	Industrie AG Berlin-Falkensee	Berlin
				Worker	Arbeiterin	Portrix Werke	Berlin
				Machinist	Maschinenarbeiter		Nauen
				Worker	Arbeiterin	Berlin-Seegerfelder Industrie AG	Berlin
Maria L	Cook	Cuisiniere		Semi-skilled worker	Hilfsarbeiterin		Berlin
Henriette M	Servant			Worker	Arbeiterin	Blaupunkt Werke, Berlin-Reinickendorf	Berlin
				Servant	Hausgehilfin	Verscheidene Haushalte	Berlin

Name	*Previous profession*	*Profession (French or Flemish title)*	*Employer in Belgium*	*Employment in Germany*	*Job title*	*Employer*	*Place of employment*
Gertrude M	Kitchenhand	Küchenmädchen				Gasstätte Tivoli	Bad Kissingen
						Deutsche Reichsbahnaus-besserungswerk	Berlin
Julie M					Arbeiterin		Berlin
						Norddeutsche Woll- und Kammgarn Industrie AG	Delmenhorst
						Weser Flugzeugbau	Delmenhorst
						VDM Luftfahrwerke	Frankfurt aM
Marthe P	White-collar worker	Kaufmännische Angestellte		White collar worker		Speditionsgewerbe	Berlin
Georgette P	Servant	Dienstmeid		Servant			Düsseldorf
Anna P	Servant	Dienstmeid		Worker	Arbeiter	Flachsroste Mittelrhein GmbH	Koblenz
				Housekeeper / domestic	Hausgehilfin	Restauration Gasthaus	Düsseldorf
Suzanne R				Servant			
Elisabeth S				Machinist	Maschinenarbeiterin		Berlin
Angelina S	No profession (unemployed before departure for Germany)			Worker	Arbeiterin	Mix & Genest	Berlin
Maria S	Domestic	Menager		Worker	Arbeiterin	BMW Flugzeugmotoren-werke	Berlin
				Worker	Arbeiterin	Mix & Genest, Berlin	Berlin
Juliane S				Worker	Arbeiter		Berlin
Denise S		Menagerie		Domestic servant		Employed by Baron van Wrangel	Berlin
Louise B				Kitchenhand	Küchenhilfe	Deutsche Reichsbahn, Berlin-Neukölln	Berlin
Philomena B				Worker	Arbeiterin		Berlin

Name	*Previous profession*	*Profession (French or Flemish title)*	*Employer in Belgium*	*Employment in Germany*	*Job title*	*Employer*	*Place of employment*
Lucrèce B	Seamstress	Naaister					
Suzanne E				Worker	Arbeiterin	Siemens Schuckert Werke, Berlin Siemenstadt	Berlin
Joanna E	Housewife			Ironing helper	Bügenhilfe		Berlin
Edith V	Bookshop assistant	Bediende der stationbibliotheek					Berlin
Lydia V	Waitress	Serveuse		Glass worker	Glasarbeiter	Gerrenheimer Glashüttenwerke AG	Düsseldorf
Elvira V	No profession				Gehilfin	Mahlow Kreis Berlin-Teltow	Berlin
Rosalia V	Textile worker					Firma C Lorenz AG	Berlin
Georgine W				Worker	Arbeiterin		Berlin
	Factory worker			Domestic servant/ kitchenhand	Hausgehilfin/ Keukenhelpster		Berlin
Maria W				Domestic servant	Hausangestellter		Berlin
Angela W	Seamstress	Naaister				Munitions factory	Munich
						Grocery shop	Berlin
						Munitions factory	Thuringia

Source: Data taken from individual files at SVG/DO.

Appendix 8: Belgian men's hourly earnings[2]			
Name	*Job*	*Hourly earnings (Reichmark)*	*Work hours (weekly)*
ules B	Semi-skilled worker	0.56	48
Henri C	Semi-skilled worker	0.56	48
Frans G	Trainee	0.57	
Pieter D	Trainee	0.57	
Alfons A		0.60	60
Jacques C	Metal worker (armaments industry)	0.60	
Maurice D	Semi-skilled worker	0.60	
André B	Semi-skilled worker	0.63	54
Theophile B	Worker	0.64	
Joachim B	Maintenance worker (Deutsche Reichsbahn)	0.64	
Josef M	Worker	0.65	
Jan-Baptist H	Worker (vehicle manufacturing)	0.65	
Jean D	Lifting (construction industry)	0.66	
Frans K	Excavation worker	0.68	
Alexandre B	Worker (Deutsche Reichsbahn)	0.70	54
Pierre Co	Worker	0.70	54
Pierre Co	Worker (Deutsche Reichsbahndirection)	0.70	54
Stephanus B	Cutter	0.70	
Samuel G	Worker (German railways)	0.70	54
Pieter H	Worker (manufacture of radios)	0.70	
Josef M	Delivery driver (Deutsche Reichspost)	0.70	
Josef M	Delivery driver (Organisation Todt)	0.70	
Jean P	Worker	0.71	52 ¾
Joannes K	Hall attendant	0.72	
Josef L	Skilled worker	0.72	60
Gilbert G		0.73	
Marcel Th	Semi-skilled worker	0.73	60
Ernest W	Semi-skilled metalworker	0.74	60
Raphaël D	Barber (semi-skilled worker)	0.74	
Albert Cr	Cable maker	0.75	
Victor L	Factory worker (food manufacturing)	0.75	
Louis Li	Unskilled worker (Deutsche Reichspost)	0.75	59
Marcel Sl	Skilled Postal worker (*Postfacharbeiter*)	0.75	

[2] In cases where a worker undertook more than one labour assignment in Germany each labour assignment is recorded separately in the sample.

Roger H	Mechanic (*Monteur*)	0.76	48/60
Armand Be	Barber	0.78	
Louis Ce	Semi-skilled worker	0.78	
Pierre M	Machinist	0.78	
Alfons C	Builder	0.79	
Louis A	Semi-skilled milling-machine operator	0.80	
Marcel Ba	Metal worker (Junkers aviation manufacturing)	0.80	
Henri B	Cable worker	0.80	
Henri C	Lifting (manufacture of precision parts for aviation industry)	0.80	
Jean S	Electrician	0.80	56
Robert H	Trainee	0.80	48
Josef F	Worker (aviation manufacturing)	0.80	
Petrus V	Metal worker (armaments industry)	0.80	
Paul A	Semi-skilled driller	0.81	48/60
Lodewijk B	Metalworker	0.82	54/60
Gustave D	Worker	0.82	60
Moritz L	Worker	0.82	
Pierre L	Railway wagon cleaner	0.83	
Roger H	Mechanic (*Monteur*)	0.84	
Lucien C	Mechanic (*Monteur*)	0.85	
Georges D	Metal worker (*Schlosser*)	0.85	
Adolphe K	Wire-drawer (*Drahtzieher*)	0.85	
Herman L	Engine fitter/metal worker (*Maschinenschlosser*)	0.85	
Martyn V	Lifting goods (vehicle manufacturing factory)	0.85	
Henri Cr	Painter	0.86	
Joseph A	Polisher (Junkers aviation manufacturing)	0.90	
Marcel C	Worker (railways)	0.90	
Josef W	Schreiner	0.90	
Jean Baptiste D	Plumber/welder	0.90	
Maurice D	Semi-skilled worker	0.90	
Herman L	Driller	0.90	
Cesar G	Carpenter	0.91	
Robert He	Worker (aviation manufacturing)	0.93	
André J	Metalworker	0.93	56
Karel L	Worker(aviation manufacturing)	0.95	
Marcel Ba	Metal worker (aviation manufacturing)	1.00	
Josef W	Carpenter	1.00	

Adrian D	Worker	1.00	
Armand D	Worker (Armaments industry)	1.00	
Julian H	Painter	1.00	
Frans So	Metal worker (aviation manufacturing)	1.00	
François S	Spray painter (machinery manufacturing)	1.00	
Charles T	Technical draughtsman (electrical goods manufacturing)	1.00	
Gustave Po	Metalworker	1.00	
Martin H	Shunter on railways	1.00	
Albert V	Setter (printing industry)	1.00	48/60
Josef Co	Driller	1.05	
Benedictus V	Carpenter	1.08	
Benedictus V	Camp administrator	1.08	
Jean A	Carpenter (air-raid protection office)	1.10	48
Louis L A	Maurer (maintained buildings and ovens)	1.10	
Marcel C	Worker (chemical manufacturing)	1.10	
Arthur Du	Postal worker (Deutsche Reichspost)	1.10	
Josef Mi	Caster	1.10	
Johann Baptiste T	Loader (German railways)	1.10	
Gerardus G	Quartz cutter	1.15	
Lodwewyk V	Bookbinder	1.15	
Adolphe C	Metalworker/ fitter	1.16	54
Petrus V	Metal worker (armaments industry)	1.20	
Henri B		1.25	
Jacob B	Riveter (*Nieter*)	1.25	
Hubert J	Machine fitter	1.25	
Guillaume S		1.25	
Leo H	Worker (aviation manufacturing)	1.35	
Julius D	Engraver (printing industry)	1.36	
Josef Fr	Foreman/ Carpenter	1.50	

Source: Figures taken from individual SVG/DO files and CEGES/SOMA, AA1216.

Appendix 9: Sample wage records

Worker: Jacques A
Employer: Junkers Flugzeug- und Motorenwerke A.-G., Motorenbau Stammwerk Dessau
Industry: Aviation manufacturing

Month	*Days*	*Hours*	*Overtime bonuses*	*Gross income*	*Gross income with bonuses*	*Tax*	*Tax (of % of gross income with bonuses)*	*Social insurance*	*Social insurance (as a % of gross income with bonuses)*	*DAF*	*Arbeitertum*	*Advance payment of wages*	*Work home rent*	*Total deduct.*	*Net wage*
1	28	313.00	23.13	231.62	262.21	24.10	9.19	21.83	8.33	3.80			15.00	64.75	197.48
1	30	266.00	14.48	159.60	176.02	10.90	6.19	15.00	8.52	2.20	0.20		15.00	51.70	124.32
2	25	279.00	16.65	206.46	223.11	19.20	8.61	19.40	8.70	3.40		42.00	15.00	57.00	166.11
2	24	227.50	8.70	136.60	143.20	7.50	5.24	12.31	8.60	2.20	0.20		15.00	37.71	107.49
4	29	314.50	37.50	188.70	226.20	15.80	6.98	17.69	7.82	3.40	0.20		15.00	52.09	174.11
5	22	244.50	21.09	180.88	201.97	14.30	7.08	16.96	8.40	2.80	0.20		15.00	49.26	152.71
5		312.50	20.40	137.50	215.90	15.80	7.32	17.09	7.92	5.40	0.20		15.00	52.09	101.81
6															29.54
6	24	272.50	21.08	163.50	184.58	11.40	6.18	15.25	8.26	2.80	0.20		15.00	51.85	132.73
7	6	53.00	0.37	29.63	30.00	1.38	4.60	2.81	9.37	0.60	0.20		12.00	19.39	10.61
7	28	311.50	29.51	230.45	259.96	23.60	9.08	21.59	8.31	3.80	0.20		15.00	64.19	195.77
8	27	315.50	26.27	233.41	259.68	24.10	9.28	21.83	8.41	3.80	0.20		15.00	64.93	194.75
9	7	60.50	0.00	49.26	49.26	0.00	0.00	4.51	9.16	0.80	0.20	30.00	12.00	47.51	1.69
10	15	167.50		123.92	123.92	5.40	4.36	11.59	9.35	2.20	0.20		15.00	34.39	89.55
11	26	266.00		308.04	323.04	54.00	16.72	28.48	8.82	5.40	0.20		15.00	103.08	219.96
12	27	293.00	17...		246.72	23.66	9.59	21.59	8.75	3.00	0.20		15.00	64.19	182.53

Source: CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/36, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, original wartime payslips submitted by Jacques A.

Worker: Gustaaf E
Employer: Wilhelm Schmidding Werk, Hannover
Industry: Manufacturing

Month	*Days*	*Hours*	*Overtime bonuses (a):*	*Taxable income*	*Gross income with bonuses*	*Tax*	*Tax (of % of gross income with bonuses)*	*Social insurance*	*Social insurance (as a % of gross income with bonuses)*	*Unemploy. insurance*	*DAF*	*Arbeitertum*	*WHW (b)*	*Advance (Abschlag)*	*Net pay*
Feb-45		188	4.88	183.33	188.21	5.20				16.96	3.40		0.52	0.80	106.08

(a) including Zuschlag 15% 2.46 and 50% bonus paid on 5 3/4 hours overtime.
(b) Winterhilfswerk

Source: CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/39, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, original wartime payslips submitted by Gustaaf E.

Worker: Alfons A
Employer: Reichhold Flügger & Böcking, Harta, Kreis Hohenelbe (Sudentenland)
Industry: Paint manufacturing

Payslip January 1945

Number of workdays	*Hours*	*Overtime*	*Earnings*	*Overtime bonus*	*Accommodation assistance*	*Tax*	*Social insurance*	*DAF*	*WHW*	*Total deductions*	*Net earnings*
9	72	6.5	54 + 4.88	1.22	60.1	0	5.29	1.2	0.25	6.74	53.56

Source: CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/36, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, original wartime payslips submitted by Alfons A.

Worker: Daniel G
Employer: G Hilscher Maschinenfabrik, Chemnitz
Industry: Manufacturing

Paydate	*Hours*	*Overtime*	*Earnings*	*Lohnstd.*	*Payment in kind (Sachbezuege)*	*Social insurance*	*DAF*	*Repayment of advance*	*Net payment*
14-Apr	217.5	65.25	217.57	18.7		19.42	3.4	75	98.05
10-May	192	38.25	167.03	10.9	54	15.22	2.2	24	60.71

Source: CEGES/SOMA, AA 1216/39, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, original wartime payslips submitted by Daniel G.

Worker: Jean G
Employer: Buna-Werke Schkopau, Saxony, Kreis Saale
Industry: Manufacturing

Overtime	*Total hours*	*Hourly wage*	*Days absent and holidays*	*Wages (Arbeitslohn)*	*Wages for days absent and holidays)*	*Night shift bonus*	*Wage bonus*	*Gross earnings*	*Social insurance contributions*	*DAF*	*WHW & fines*	*Advance*	*Advance (Abschlag abz Restpfennige a. Vorm.)*	*Total deduct.*	*Net pay*
18.00	197.75	0.68	8.00	134.47	5.44	3.25	2.40	145.86	9.96	2.70	3.00	30.00	70.00	123.96	21.60

Source: CEGES/SOMA, AA 1216/39, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, original wartime payslips submitted by Jean G.

Appendix 10: Belgian women's hourly earnings[3]			
Name	**Job**	**Earnings**	**Work hours**
Rosa A	Machinist (*Automatenhilfer*)	0.40	48/60
Andrienne B	Camp worker	0.50	48/56
Andrienne B	Domestic assistant (*Hausmädchen*)	0.50	
Nelly D	Worker	0.50	
Pauline H	Worker	0.46 ½	48/60
Georgine F	Worker	0.50	48/60
Georgine F	Worker	0.50	48/60
Virginie F	Worker	0.48	48
Joanna G	Worker	0.50	
Marguerite G	Packer	0.50	
Wilhelmina G	Canteen assistant	0.42	
Adolphine H	Worker	0.49	48
Adolphine H	Machinist	0.50	
Florentina H	Worker	0.50	48/56
Simonne H		0.59	50
Paula H	Worker	0.50	60
Suzanna H	Semi-skilled worker	0.48	54
Hélène L	Worker	0.50	48/60
Henriette M	Worker	0.53	52/55
Suzanne E	Worker	0.50	48/60
Rachel L	Worker (armaments manufacturing)	0.50	

Source: Figures taken from individual SVG/DO files.

[3] In cases where a worker undertook more than one labour assignment in Germany each labour assignment is recorded separately in the sample.

Appendix 11: Year of first labour assignment in Germany			
Year	*Men**	*Women*	*Total*
1940	16	2	18
1941	65	19	84
1942	47	20	67
1943	23	8	31
1944	1	0	1
1945	0	0	0

* In two cases the year of the first labour assignment in Germany is unclear and one migrant worker is not taken into account.

Appendix 12: The distribution of foreign civilian and native workers across the economic sectors in August 1944					
	Agriculture and Forestry %	Mining %	Industry %	Construction %	Service %
Belgians	2	1	72	10	14
Croatians	8	5	62	15	11
Czechs	5	5	58	16	17
Dutch	9	2	59	12	19
French	9	1	72	6	13
Italians	10	4	50	23	13
Poles	68	3	18	4	6
Serbians	15	8	51	8	17
Soviets	35	4	45	4	12
Foreigners	36	3	43	6	12
Total Workforce	18	4	42	5	32

Source: Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 225.

Appendix 13: Number of foreign workers housed in camps at the end of 1942/beginning of 1943, percentage of the overall population represented by foreign workers in 1939 and 1945 and the number and average size of camps in each district

District	*Number of foreign residents in 1942/ 1943*	*Total number of residents in 1942/ 1943*	*Percentage of residents represented by foreign workers in 1942/1943*	*Number of foreign workers in 1945*	*Percentage of population represented by foreign workers in 1945*	*Number of camps*	*Average size of camps*
Reinickendorf	20,461	200,531	10.2	162,951	12.6	83	247
Spandau	18,722	170,384	11.0	139,875	13.4	101	185
Tempelhof	15,652	125.360	12.5	93,340	16.8	58	270
Köpenick	10,213	120,446	8.5	104,624	9.8	65	157
Treptow	10.137	118,159	8.6	97,920	10.4	56	181
Neukölln	9,555	303,170	3.2	247,070	3.9	85	112
Lichtenberg	8,744	196,811	4.4	145,388	6.0	27	324
Pankow	7,946	154,725	5.1	130,143	6.1	34	234
Tiergarten	6,611	213.572	3.1	92,476	7.1	82	81
Wilmersdorf	6,467	206,779	3.1	104,242	6.2	14	462
Mitte	6,330	263,555	2.4	120,816	5.2	148	43
Charlottenburg	4,490	299,955	1.5	174,153	2.6	50	90
Weißensee	3,968	90,277	4.4	74,139	5.4	40	99
Kreuzberg	3,915	332,635	1.2	185,764	2.1	55	71
Wedding	3,252	325,099	1.0	213,748	1.5	13	250
Schöneberg	3,186	277,948	1.1	149,339	2,1	11	290
Zehlendorf	2,457	81,141	3.0	65,738	3.7	9	273
Steglitz	2,240	213,920	1.0	104,910	2.1	25	90
Prenzlauer	1,874	298,025	0.6	226,144	0.8	14	134
Friedrichshain	1,232	346,264	0.4	174,625	0.7	40	31
Total	147,452	4,338,756	3.4	2,807	5.3	1,011	146

Source: Pagenstecher, "Lager Listen und Errinerungsberichte", 104.

Appendix 14: Largest camps in Berlin at the end of 1942 and beginning of 1943	
Camp	*Number of residents*
Fritz Werner AG, Daimlerstrasse, Tempelhof	2,590
DWM, Lunalager, Pankow-Schönholz	2,467
Argus Motoren, Graf Roedern-Allee 32, Reinickendorf	2,425
Arbeiterstadt Grosse Halle, Spandau-West	2,085
Weserflug, Hindenburgstrasse 63, Wilmersdorf	1,800
Weserflug, Columbiastrasse, Tempelhof	1,700
Deutsche Reichsbahn, Kaulsdorfer Strasse 90, Lichtenberg	1,542
Deutsche Industriewerke, Heidereuterstrasse, Spandau	1,507
OT-Lager, Jagen 57/58, Wilmersdorf (Deutsche)	1,500
Siemens & Schuckert, Gartenfelderstrasse, Spandau	1,450
Rheinmetall-Borsig, Strasse 1, Reinickendorf	1,318
Verschiedene, Seestrasse 78/83, Wedding	1,300
AEG Kabelwerk, Wendenschlossstrasse 304, Köpenick	1,295
Luftanlagengesellschaft, Alboinstrasse 82/102, Schöneberg	1,250
Stadt Berlin, Arnimstrasse, Weissensee	1,200
RAB, am Strandbad Wannsee, Zehlendorf (v.a. Deutsche)	1,140
Reichspost, Steinstrasse, Tempelhof	1,133
Generalbauinspektor, Zabel-Krüger-Damm 38, Reinickendorf	1,123
Siemens & Halske, Bahnhof Jungfernheide, Charlottenburg	1,112
Generalbauinspektor, Weissenhöher Strasse, Lichenberg	1,100
Knorr-Bremse, Roederstrasse/Wolfgangstrasse, Lichtenberg	1,097
Arbeitsamt, Durchgangslager Wilhelmshagen, Köpenick	1,097
Maget, Krumpuhler Weg, Reinickendorf	1,030
Daimler-Benz, Säntisstrasse, Tempelhof	1,028
Nordbau, Hartriegelstrasse, Treptow	1,017
Siemens & Schuckert, Rhenaniastrasse, Spandau	1,000
Wehrersatzinspektion, Am Adlersgestell, Treptow	1,000

Source: Pagenstecher, "Lager Listen und Errinerungsberichte, 105.

Appendix 15: AEG – Apparatefabriken Berlin-Treptow company accommodation for Belgian employees

Berlin-Friedrichhain

Berlin O17, Breslauerstr. 3 Hotel Butter	AEG-AT *Ausländerheim* established at rented premises. Two floors of the hotel and adjoining rooms were rented by AEG-AT. Earliest reference to the home: 1 July 1941, destroyed by bomb on 3 February 1945. Size of rented premises: 195^{2}m Number of Belgian residents: 3M, 1F Nationality of other residents: Italian	AH
Berlin O17, Koppenstr. 100	Number of Belgian residents: 1F	PA
Berlin O17, Langstr. 110	Number of Belgian residents: 1F	PA
O17, Mühlenstr. 45, b/Meminges (or 55)	Number of Belgian residents: 1M	PA

Bezirk-Köpernick

Schmökwitz, Am Seddinsee 17	Number of Belgian residents: 1F	PA

Berlin-Kreuzberg

Berlin SO 36, Manteuffelstr. 81	AEG-AT *Ausländerheim* established in rented factory building. Rented accommodation included the first, third and fourth floors of the building. Lease began on 1 May 1942. Size of rented premises: 540^{2}m Number of Belgian residents: 8M Nationality of other residents: Dutch, Polish, French	AH
Berlin SO 36, Naunynstr. 27 Dörings Festsäle	AEG-AT *Ausländerheim* established at Dörings Festsäle. Rented accommodation included one hall with gallerie, washrooms and toilets. Earliest reference to the home 1 April 1941. Size of rented premises: 577^{2}m Number of Belgian residents: 14M Nationality of other residents: Dutch, French	AH
SO 36, Schlesische Str. 35	Number of Belgian residents: 1M Size of rented premises: 155^{2}m Nationality of other residents: Dutch	AH
Berlin SO 36, Hochbahn-Gebäude Schlesisches Tor Restaurant Torkrug	AEG-AT *Ausländerheim* for established at premises rented from 10 October 1941. Rented premises included a hall with adjoining rooms, as well as rooms on the first floor. Size of rented premises: 800^{2}m Number of Belgian residents: 6F, 4M	AH

Berlin, Schlesisches Tor 3	Number of Belgian residents: 2F, 3M Nationality of other residents: French	AH
Berlin SO 36, Waldemarstr. 20 Hotel Stadt Görlitz	AEG-AT *Ausländerheim* established at rented premises. Earliest record 1 October 1942. Completely destroyed in a bombing raid on 14 April 1945. Size of rented premises: 580^2m Number of Belgian residents: 3F, 2M Nationality of other residents: Dutch	AH
Berlin SO 36, Kottbusser Damm 10, bei Langheim	Number of Belgian residents: 1F	PA

Berlin-Lichtenberg

Berlin-Lichtenberg, Kynastr. 19 Schonert Gaststätte	AEG-AT *Ausländerheim*. Accommodation rented included a hall and adjoining rooms. Earliest record of the home 16 November 1940. On 8 March 1943 the 102 French female workers were moved to barracks 1 at the *Lager* Johannisthal. Total of ten residents registered on 26 May 1943. Company correspondence from May 1944 indicates that ten workers were still living at the premises even though the home had been seriously damaged by bombing in January 1944. Size of rented premises: 558^2m Number of Belgian residents: 4F, 1M	AH
Rümmelsburg, Türrschmidstr. 45 Kerns Festsäle	AEG-AT *Ausländerwohnheim*. First reference on 1 February 1944.Completely destroyed in a bombing raid on 26 February 1945. Number of Belgian residents: 1M	AH

Bezirk Mitte

Berlin N31, Ackerstr. 50 (also referred to as N4) Bezirk Mitte	AEG-AT *Ausländerheim* established at a rented business premises (*Gewerberaum*). Earliest reference 1 October 1942. On 8 February 1943 there were 128 female workers living in the home. The building destroyed in bombing in April 1945. Size of rented premises: 695^2m Number of Belgian residents: 6M, 1F	AH

Berlin-Neukölln

Berlin-Neukölln (SO 36), Weigandufer 9	AEG-AT *Ausländerheim* established in rented premises. Earliest record 1 October 1942. Size of rented premises: 97^2m Number of Belgian residents: 2M Nationality of other residents: Dutch	AH

Berlin-Neukölln, Jägerstrasse 11	AEG-AT *Ausländerheim* was established in rented premises from 1 July 1942. Rented accommodation had been a furniture business. The home housed approximately twenty-five couples of different nationalities and was run by Frau Kijersgaard. Size of rented premises: 330^2m Number of Belgian residents: 3F, 1M Nationality of other residents: Dutch, French, Italian	AH
Berlin-Neukölln, Jägerstrasse 3	AEG-AT *Ausländerheim* established in rented premises. Accommodation included rooms, a billiard and clubrooms, plus toilets. Accommodation was used for twenty female workers. Earliest record 15 November 1941. Number of residents on 30 April 1943. Size of rented premises: 90^2m Number of Belgian residents: 1F, 1M Nationality of other residents: Dutch, Polish, French, Italian	AH
Berlin-Neukölln, Weise Str. 57 bei Schulel	Number of Belgian residents: 1M	PA
Berlin Neukölln, Bergstr. 136-137 Deutsches Wirtshaus	AEG-AT *Ausländerheim* at rented premises 136-7 Bergstrasse. Earliest record of the home 15 February 1941. Totally destroyed by bombing on 29 December 1943. One large hall, one small hall, one adjoining room, as well as bathrooms and toilets. From June 1941 the company rented an additional hall at the premises. Size of rented premises: 216^2m & 65^2m Number of Belgian residents: 4M	AH
Berlin-Neukölln, SO 36, Maybach Ufer 7	Number of Belgian residents: 1M	AH

Bezirk Prenzlauer Berg

NO 55, Lindenhockweg 3, b/Erdmann	Number of Belgian residents: 1M	PA

Berlin-Reinickendorf

Berlin-Hermsdorf, Dorfstr. 23	Number of Belgian residents: 1M	PA

Bezirk Schöneberg

Berlin-Schöneberg, Bahnstr. 48/Jahnstr. bei Schmolke	Number of Belgian residents: 1M	PA
Berlin W35, Yorckstr. 40	Number of Belgian residents: 1M	PA

Bezirk Treptow

Lager Johannisthal, Gross Berliner Damm	*Ausländerlager* for AEG Transformatorenwerk Oberspree. The plans for the Lager Johannisthal, Gross Berliner Damm, are dated 20 March 1942. In September 1944 600 workers were housed at the camp in three barracks. In each barracks there were individual rooms that could accommodate twelve workers. Company correspondence dated 14 September 1944 indicates that due to damage to many of the company's homes for foreign workers the company had been forced to housed different nationalities in the same barracks room. Correspondence also indicates that the company set up "arrest rooms" with the approval of the *Gestapo* Commissioner Rothfeldt in 1944. Workers were locked up in these rooms for between one to five days for misdemeanours such as loafing on the job (*Bummelei*). Number of Belgian residents: 14F, 7M Nationality of other residents: Dutch, Polish, French, Italian, Russian	L
Berlin-Treptow, Alt Treptow 4/5 Paradiesgarten	AEG-AT *Ausländerheim* established at rented premises. Rooms rented included hall, toilets and adjoining rooms. Premises rented from 1 May 1941. Destroyed in a bombing raid on 23 November 1943. Size of rented premises: *815*^{2}m Number of Belgian residents: 7M Nationality of other residents: French, Hungarian and Italian	AH
Berlin-Treptow, Alt-Treptow 2/3 Deutscher Garten	AEG-AT *Ausländerheim* was established at the rented premises. The rooms leased included the hall and three adjoining rooms. Earliest record of the home was 1 October 1942. Destroyed in a bombing raid on 26 February 1945. Size of rented premises: 150^{2}m Number of Belgian residents: 4M Nationality of other residents: Dutch, French	AH
Berlin-Treptow, Kiefholzstr. 16, bei Kruger	Number of Belgian residents: 1M	PA
Berlin-Treptow, Neue Krug Allee 33 Neu-Tivoli	AEG-AT *Ausländerheim* established at rented premises. The lease stipulated that male workers from the Protectorate were not to be housed at the home. The lease also included the cleaning of the rooms rented by AEG. The lease of the property commenced on 1 January 1941. Destroyed in a bombing raid on 26 February 1945. Size of rented premises: 136^{2}m Number of Belgian residents: 3F, 1M	AH

Berlin-Wittenau

Berlin-Wittenau, Oranienburgerstr. 95	Number of Belgian residents: 1M	PA

Various and unclear addresses

Berlin, Karlstr.	Number of Belgian residents: 1M	PA
Erkstr. 19, bei Erler	Number of Belgian residents: 1M	PA
Gesundbrunnen, Ramlerstr. 36, bei Ewald	Number of Belgian residents: 1M	PA
Hotel Stadt Posen	Number of Belgian residents: 1M	U
Johannisthalbrücke Langenstr. 110 bei van der Broeck	Number of Belgian residents: 1F	PA
Kanaertstr. 19	Number of Belgian residents: 1M	PA
Königsheideweg 244, bei Seidel	Number of Belgian residents: 1F	PA
N20 Grünthalerstr. 59 & 54	Number of Belgian residents: 1F	U
N65 Antwerpenerstr. 38 bei Bleckermann	Number of Belgian residents: 1F	PA
Neanderstr. 30	Number of Belgian residents: 1F	PA
Niederschöneweide, Gross Berliner Damm	Number of Belgian residents: 1F, 1F	U
Storkow, Burgstr. 4	Number of Belgian residents: 1M, 1M	U
Wernsdorf bei Berlin, Dorfstr. 23 bei Lankwitz	Number of Belgian residents: 1F	PA
Zühldorf, Wandlitz Dorfstr. 21	Number of Belgian residents: 1M	PA

Sources: Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep. 227-02: Nr.2-65 & 77.
ITS Bad Arolsen, inventory number 1614, AEG personnel and social insurance records 1941-45.

Key:
L: Lager
AH: *Ausländerheim*
PA: Private accommodation
U: Unknown

Appendix 16: Jules H

Flemish volunteer Jules H was admitted to the Wittenauer *Heilstätten* psychiatric institution in Berlin-Wittenau on 24 January 1944 and died at the institution on 27 June 1944.[4] His case raises intriguing questions regarding the medical assessments carried out in occupied Belgium. While illnesses of the nervous system were medical conditions medical assessors considered when determining whether a worker was fit to work in Germany, epilepsy apparently did not preclude Jules H from deployment in the Reich. Perhaps he had elected not divulge this information when he volunteered to work in the Reich, fearing that he would not be permitted to go to Germany. On 24 January 1944 Jules H was transferred from the *Gemeinschaftslager* Fliegerhorst Staaken, Nennhauserdamm 139, Berlin-Staaken, where he had been resident since May 1942. His admission record indicates that he was transferred to the Wittenauer *Heilstätten* because he was suspected of suffering from an organic psychosis that necessitated his confinement in a closed institution. However, the medical diagnosis upon his admission to the Wittenauer *Heilstätten* indicates that Jules H was suffering from epilepsy and tuberculosis. It was not uncommon for epileptics to be committed to psychiatric institutions during this era in Germany and there were those who advocated "euthanasia" for epileptics. Staff noted that it was barely possible to understand him because he spoke very poor German. Institution staff repeatedly referred to him as Frenchman and recorded in his medical notes that they were puzzled because he did not respond to questions posed in French. At the time of his arrival at the institution, staff recorded that Jules H frequently suffered from severe epileptic fits and headaches. While his admission record indicates that staff at the Wittenauer *Heilstätten* anticipated a period of hospitalisation of two to three months, Jules H's health deteriorated steadily. Staff described him as a "big strong man with well developed musculature" when he arrived at the institution; however, his hospital record documents his marked physical deterioration within the space of just a few months. Jules H's weight dropped from 65.8kg on 1 March, 61kg on 1 April, 61.3 on 1 May 1944 and 53kg on 2 June 1944. This weight loss was a common indicator of tuberculosis. Tests were undertaken to assess the extent of his tuberculosis infection. In spite of his affliction with tuberculosis and epilepsy, staff employed Jules H in the institution work gang from 7 February 1944. This was a common practice in German psychiatric institutions, as institutional patients, like other members of society, were expected to contribute to the general good. On 27 April staff recorded that he was calm and his work in the institution was

[4] SVG/DO, SDR176091 and D ad. 4074/374892.

satisfactory. The final record in Jules H's file indicates that he died from tuberculosis and the accompanying mental disturbance on 27 June 1944. Tragically, the request that he be admitted to a closed institution probably meant that he was not sent home to Belgium and was instead left to languish in a German psychiatric institution until his death. The distress and misery Jules H experienced is quite unimaginable. He was committed to a closed psychiatric institution where he struggled to communicate with staff even on a basic level. The medical record provides no indication that he received visitors and he most likely spent the final months of his life alone in Germany and apart from his friends and family in Belgium.

Appendix 17: Bombing Raids on Berlin

Year	*Dates*	*Bombing carried out by*	*Deaths*	*Number of bombed out residents*	*Other details*
1940	26/27 August	Royal Air Force			
	28/29 August	Royal Air Force			
	31 August	Royal Air Force			
	3/4 September	Royal Air Force			
	4/5 September	Royal Air Force			
	10/11 September	Royal Air Force			
	23/24 September	Royal Air Force			
	7/8 October	Royal Air Force			
	14/15 October	Royal Air Force			
	20/21 October	Royal Air Force			
	1/2 November	Royal Air Force			
	6/7 November	Royal Air Force			
	14/15 November	Royal Air Force			
	15/16 December	Royal Air Force			
	20/21 December	Royal Air Force			
1941	12/13 March	Royal Air Force			
	23/24 March	Royal Air Force			
	9/10 April	Royal Air Force			
	17/18 April	Royal Air Force			
	2/3 June	Royal Air Force			
	2/3 August	Royal Air Force			
	12/13 August	Royal Air Force			
	2/3 September	Royal Air Force			
	7/8 September	Royal Air Force			
	20/21 September	Royal Air Force			
	7/8 November	Royal Air Force			
1943	16/17 January	Royal Air Force			
	17/18 January	Royal Air Force			
	1/2 March	Royal Air Force	709	64,909	
	27/28 March	Royal Air Force			
	29/30 March	Royal Air Force			
	23/24 August	Royal Air Force	899	103,558	
	31 August/1 September	Royal Air Force			
	3/4 September	Royal Air Force	623	39,844	

	18/19 November	Royal Air Force			Commencement of the Battle of Berlin.
	22/23 November	Royal Air Force	2,000	175,000	
	23/24 November	Royal Air Force	1,000	100,000	
	26/27 November	Royal Air Force			
	2/3 December	Royal Air Force			
	16/17 December	Royal Air Force	628	30,063	
	23/24 December	Royal Air Force			
	29/30 December	Royal Air Force			
1944	1/2 January	Royal Air Force			
	2/3 January	Royal Air Force			
	20/21 January	Royal Air Force	306	20,938	
	27/28 January	Royal Air Force	426	19,945	
	28/29 January	Royal Air Force	531	69,466	
	30/31 January	Royal Air Force	582	82,980	
	15/16 January	Royal Air Force	320		
	6 March	US Army Air Force			
	8 March	US Army Air Force			
	9 March	US Army Air Force			
	24/25 March	Royal Air Force			End of the Battle of Berlin
	29 April	US Army Air Force			
	7 May	US Army Air Force			
	8 May	US Army Air Force			
	19 May	US Army Air Force			
	24 May	US Army Air Force			
	21 June	US Army Air Force			
	6 August	US Army Air Force			
	5 December	US Army Air Force			
1945	3 February	US Army Air Force	2,541	119,057	
	26 February	US Army Air Force	636	71,283	
	18 March	US Army Air Force	336	79,785	
	14/15 April	Royal Air Force	5,000	40,000	Potsdam
	20/21 April	Royal Air Force			

Source: Kucklick, *Feuersturm*, 136-47.

Appendix 18: Recruitment for Rex, Wallonische Arbeitsdienst and the SS Langemarck Brigade

During the latter stages of the war, leaders from Belgian fascist organisations, Rex and the Flemish *Duits-Vlaamse Arbeidsgemeenschap* (German-Flemish Association) or DeVlag, visited camps and workplaces across Germany to recruit Belgians for military and paramilitary units to fight on the Eastern Front and defend Germany against the approaching Red Army. The Rexist *Légion Wallonie* was created in the aftermath of Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. Rexist leader Léon Degrelle claimed that the future structure of Europe would be decided on battlefields of the East, and by fighting shoulder to shoulder with German troops the *légionnaires* would win the respect of the Nazi leaders and would thereby guarantee their country's place in the New Europe.[5] Most Belgians did not, however, share Degrelle's view, and the initial recruitment for the *Légion Wallonie* was a categorical failure.[6] The accounts of Belgians indicate that the *Légion Wallonie* organised events to recruit Belgians working in Germany. A concert was held at the Berlin Zoo in the centre of city by the *Légion Wallonie* in early 1943. The *Légion Wallonie* had sustained heavy losses during the escape from the Soviet armies after the Battle of the Korsun-Cherkasy Pocket in January/February 1944 and was reduced to a virtual rump, making it imperative to enrol a substantial number of new recruits as rapidly as possible. During the spring of 1944 Rexist leader Degrelle devoted much of his energies to a propaganda campaign to recruit Belgians to join the ranks of the *Légion Wallonie*. Martin Conway observes, "One of Degrelle's obstinate beliefs during the latter years of the war was that those Belgian men working in factories in Germany were more eager than their compatriots in Belgium to serve in the *Légion Wallonie*".[7] The accounts of Belgians who attended these recruitment sessions indicate, however, that efforts to recruit Belgian workers for German military and paramilitary units met with little success. Conscripted worker Raymond V recalled an information session held in Bremen:

[5] Conway, *Collaboration in Belgium*, 100.
[6] Ibid., 97.
[7] Ibid., 253.

> The Belgians had to attend two information sessions encouraging them to join (the fighting) on the Eastern Front. They were given by Rex and DeVlag. The second was organised because the first one was not compulsory and had very little success despite the packets of cigarettes that were distributed.[8]

Despite the offer of incentives such as better rations and cigarettes, efforts to recruit Belgians to join military and paramilitary units on a voluntary basis largely failed. Volunteers who had gone to Germany out of economic necessity and conscripted workers who had been deported to Germany generally did not share Nazi sympathies. Moreover, the Allied landings in Normandy on 6 June 1944 gave Belgians working in Germany hope that the war would soon be over and most Belgians were therefore focussed on surviving the last months of the war until their liberation. The unwillingness of Belgian workers to sign up for service with military and paramilitary units is understandable – many regarded Germany's defeat as inevitable and military service on the Eastern Front clearly carried great risks. Additionally, those working in Germany were well aware that those regarded as collaborators would face reprisals in the wake of Germany's defeat. Willem L reported that, while efforts to recruit Belgian workers to the ranks of the SS were treated with derision, some workers suddenly disappeared from his camp following the recruitment sessions, apparently lured in by the promise of better rations. Those from his camp who joined the ranks of the SS kept their decision secret probably fearing that their fellow workers would brand them as traitors. Fascist organisations therefore turned to more coercive measures to recruit workers. Willem L recalled, "The black market flourished notwithstanding the fact that it could have life-threatening consequences. Those who were caught were given the choice: either go to the prison at Berlin Alexanderplatz or sign up for the *Waffen-SS* and serve on the Eastern Front".[9] Alfons L similarly recalled how his companion Ursmar van Vooren, who was the youngest Belgian in their barracks and was given the nickname Casimir, was forced to join the SS Brigade Langemarck in Berlin:

> Even Casimir left me in the lurch. He did not show up at work for four days and that spelt trouble for him. Then he came back one day and looked at me as if he wanted to say what have I done? He had no other choice: to be locked up in a disciplinary camp or to sign up with the SS Brigade Langemarck. He

[8] CEGES/SOMA, AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire* – Raymond V.
[9] Ibid., AA1216/50, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Willem L.

chose the second option. When he departed I could not even look at him, even though he acted out of necessity.[10]

Most of the men in his barracks, who also included the KAJ leader Jef Vyncke, departed Belgium on the same transport on 19 March 1943 and came from the same part of Belgium. Alfons L and Ursmar V had shared a bunk and it was with anger and great sadness that Alfons L watched his close friend Casimir depart for the SS Brigade Langemarck. Ursmar departed just as others from the close-knit group were transferred from the Deutsche Kabelwerke in Berlin-Ostkreuz to a sister factory sixty kilometres outside Berlin in Ketsendorf in 1944. The departures hit van Laere particularly hard: "After sharing joys and sorrows of all the months together, I was overcome with grief as my friends departed for an unknown fate".[11] The men had become a substitute family during their time in Berlin and it was with great sadness that groups were broken up in the latter half of the war as industrial plants and workers were transferred outside Berlin. Other accounts also indicate that recruitment was not always voluntary. Another worker recalled that he and a fellow worker from his camp received a mobilisation order for the *Wallonische Arbeitsdienst/Service Travail Wallon* (Wallonian Labour Service) instructing them to report to a registration point near Wolfenbüttel on 1 November 1944, "We knew nothing at all about what would await us or about what we would find there, nothing at all. Nothing had prepared us for the terrible surprise that awaited us: having to put on a German uniform".[12] The symbolic importance of donning the uniform of the conqueror cannot be underestimated. Most Belgians regarded the creation of the *Légion Wallonie* as a monstrous act for which there could be no excuse, and joining the *Légion Wallonie* was widely regarded as an act of treason.[13] Even those who had joined the ranks of the *Légion Wallonie* voluntarily were reluctant to return to Belgium wearing a German uniform. Soon after his arrival in Germany in April 1943 Lucien B met a young man wearing a *Légion Wallonie* uniform on the way back to his barracks after work. The young man asked him whether he was Belgian and explained that he had been granted a leave pass to return to Belgium, but did not want to return home to Belgium wearing his uniform, and besides had met a girl in

[10] Ibid., BA 15.654, Alfons L, "Bommen op Berlin", 27.
[11] Ibid., 26.
[12] Ibid., AA1216/1, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire* – Pierre Jean Louis Clemens.
[13] Conway, *Collaboration in Belgium*, 100.

Berlin. The man offered to give him his leave pass in exchange for money or clothes that he could sell on the black market. Lucien B made arrangements to meet the *légionnaire* the following day. After thinking about the offer overnight and speaking to his comrades he decided against taking up the offer because he did not want to return home in a German uniform.[14] This would prove to be his only opportunity to return to Belgium – he was later refused leave after another worker for whom he acted as a guarantor failed to return to Germany. Lucien B's account also points to enforced conscription of Belgian workers in the Reich. On 24 December 1944 Boskin was called to speak to the factory director. According to his account he and a Frenchman were told that he had to go to a *Wallonische Arbeitsdienst* camp. The men departed for the camp near Wolfenbüttel on 31 December 1944. At the end of March 1945, after they had spent three months at the training camp, the recruits received a visit from a dozen men in black uniforms and civilian clothing. These men told the recruits that they were representatives of the new Belgian government and that Germany needs combatants. After the liberation of Belgium in September 1944 some Belgian collaborators fled to Germany. Embryonic exile governments for Flanders and Wallonia were established in Germany following Belgium's liberation. Collaborators found a means of legitimating their existence in propaganda work to win Belgians working in Germany over to the Nazi cause. Lucien B recalled how the men were forced to join the ranks of the armed *Waffen*-SS. After the men completed their training they were told by officials that they would be departing on 1 April 1945. Each of the men was asked:

> "Do you agree to swear the oath of loyalty to the *Führer*?" "No". "Do you agree to join the *Waffen*-SS?" With the exception of one person, we all responded with a concerted "NO". Then they told us: "That does not matter in any event, you have been mobilised".[15]

There was much talk after the war about enforced mobilisation of Belgian workers in the Reich for German military and paramilitary units. Records gathered by Belgian Liaison Officers in Germany include lists of Belgian men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five compiled by local police for *Waffen-SS* recruitment officers, indicating that systematic efforts to recruit Belgian workers to the ranks of the Waffen-SS. It is notable that lists dating to March 1943 suggest that efforts to recruit

[14] CEGES/SOMA, AB1202, Lucien B, "Témoignage 1943-1945", 5-6.
[15] Ibid., 19.

Belgian workers to German military formations were not limited to the final stages of the war.[16] It is difficult to offer any indication of the number of Belgians civilian workers who were recruited or their nature of their service in these armed units.

[16] SVG/DO, R.547/Tr.18622, Lists of Belgian nationals registered in Düsseldorf prepared by commissioners in police districts for the *Waffen-SS* recruitment officer at the *Germanische SS-Sturmbanne, Sonderstab West*, Düsseldorf.

Appendix 19: Activity of the Young Christian Workers in Berlin

The privileges enjoyed by western European workers also extended to the treatment they received from representatives of the Catholic and Protestant churches in Germany. Seventy-one percent of Berlin's population were Protestant, while Catholics represented ten percent of the city's population.[17] By contrast with Poles who were forbidden to attend the same church services as Germans in the Polish Decrees published by Himmler on 8 March 1940, Belgian Catholics were able to worship alongside German parishioners at churches across Berlin. There were, however, sometimes tensions between Belgian Catholics and Protestant clergymen in Germany. In Altenburg south of Leipzig, for example, ten members of the KAJ left the church after the pastor stated that the Bible – rather than the rosary – was the way to prayer. Belgian Catholics did not, as a general rule, use Protestant churches as a place to gather or worship.[18] Belgian Catholics who had no opportunity to worship in a Catholic church sometimes sought to create a space to worship in their barracks, for example putting up religious etchings and praying at the end of their bed. Such efforts by residents who were perhaps the only observant Catholics in their barracks sometimes met with mockery and derision from other residents. Others sought to ensure that religious holidays such as Easter were observed in their camps. At one camp Catholic residents requested that others maintain a minute of silence, while at another camp residents were asked to refrain from using the piano on Good Friday. The KAJ organisers worked actively in Berlin to assist Belgian Catholics.

While the treatment western European workers received from the churches in Germany was not formally set out by the Nazi authorities, certainly the approach of religious leaders was shaped by fear of how the Nazi authorities might perceive their behaviour and how officials might react. After their arrival at the *Gemeinschaftslager* Egelfühlstrasse in Berlin-Spandau, Jan A and his friends attended mass every Sunday morning and also attended church services on Christian holidays such as Easter.[19] Flemish Catholics had the opportunity to attend confession with Dutch-speaking

[17] *Meyers Lexikon*, 8th ed., s.v. "Berlin".
[18] Frans Selleslagh, "De klandestiene KAJ," 91.
[19] CEGES/SOMA: AA1260/60, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jan A diary.

priest Father Veuens on Saturdays at 20.30 at the Saint Pius Church on Palissadestrasse 73-74, Berlin NO 18.[20] However, it was probably difficult for most Flemish Catholics living in Berlin to attend confession with a Flemish-speaking cleric due to their long working hours and the distance they needed to travel. No information has been recorded regarding the availability of francophone priests in Berlin.

The Young Christian Workers (KAJ/JOC) was also active in Germany. The organisation had been established by Brussels priest Jozef Cardijn in 1924-1925 and was made up of four branches: the *Kristelijke Arbeidersjeugd* (KAJ); the *Vrouwelijke Kristelijke Arbeidersjeugd* (VKAJ); the *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* (JOC); and the *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne Féminine* (JOCF). At the beginning of the Second World War the Young Christian Workers had a membership of roughly 90,000 and aimed to Christianise or re-Christianise Belgian youth and the working class. [21] One of the organisation's founding principles was Christian charity.[22] The introduction of labour conscription on 6 October 1942 brought an intensification of the organisation's activities. Placing the organisation in direct opposition to the Military Administration's conscription of Belgian workers, the KAJ/JOC counselled its members to refuse to sign the labour contract agreeing to go to Germany and not to depart if they were conscripted. Spontaneous efforts to assist conscripted workers and their families sprang up across Belgium in the immediate aftermath of the introduction of conscription. Priests and KAJ/JOC leaders went to the homes of conscripted workers and advised conscripts to show courage and provided religious and material support to the families of departing workers. The urgency of establishing efficient support in Germany was underscored at an emergency meeting convened by Jozef Cardijn and attended by Cardijn's adjunct priest Magnus and the chairmen of the KAJ and JOC respectively, Jef Deschuyffeleer and Victor Michel. Representatives of the four branches of the KAJ/JOC wrote a joint letter to Cardinal

[20] Ibid., undated postcard sent by Marcel V to Jan A.
[21] In the period 1890-1950 the Church hierarchy and leading Catholics attached ever greater importance to a coherent class vision and well-developed class organisations. Priest Jozef Cardijn's organisation was linked to the Catholic workers' movement and Catholic Action. Jan de Meyer, "The Formation of a Christian Workers' Culture in the Pillarized Societies: Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands (1850-1950)," in *Between Cross and Class: Comparative Histories of Christian Labour in Europe 1840-2000*, ed. Lex Heerma van Voss, Patrick Pasture, and Jan de Maeyer (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 99-100.
[22] Selleslagh, "De klandestiene KAJ", 88.

van Roey on 19 December 1942 calling for unified action to provide religious and moral support the Belgian labour deportees. Belgian Cardinal van Roey gave his support to the establishment of Aid for Workers Abroad in late December 1942. This organisation included representatives of the KAJ/JOC, Catholic employers' groups, scouting organisations, student groups and Caritas Catholica. The KAJ/JOC focussed on establishing local branches in Germany that would act as service centres where young Belgian conscripts could go to seek advice and assistance. This work would further intensify in the months that followed in response to the hundreds of letters written by Belgian conscripts decrying the situation in Germany.

The work of the Flemish wing of the Young Christian Workers has been well documented through the work of Selleslagh who surveyed KAJ organisers in the early 1970s. The activities of the KAJ will be drawn upon to illustrate the work of the KAJ/JOC in Germany. The KAJ had groups in many German cities where Belgians were deployed, including Bad-Blankenburg, Berlin, Brunswick, Bremen, Chemnitz, Cologne, Danzig, Darmstadt, Dessau, Dresden, Goslar, Gotha, Grabow, Hamburg, Hannover, Kassel, Kiel, Leipzig, Magdeburg, Munich, Osnabruck, Stuttgart, Wetzlar, as well as the Austrian capital Vienna. There were major groups in Berlin, Magdeburg and Leipzig, which were led by Jef Vyncke, Eugeen Coine and Pol Victoor respectively. The broad directives of the KAJ in Germany were determined by the organisation's national leaders in Belgium and communicated to the leaders of the *Ausland*-KAJ (KAJ Abroad) in Germany. KAJ leaders from various German cities also worked together and held a meeting on 13 June 1943 in Leipzig, and further meetings were held in Dessau on 22 August 1943 and 12 September 1943. The purpose of these meetings was to determine directives, which local leaders then implemented directives according to local conditions and needs. It is highly significant that KAJ leaders from across Germany managed to hold meetings in Germany. The fact that the KAJ central leadership managed to hold meetings is probably a testament to the lower level of surveillance to which Belgians were subject.

The first steps towards organising the KAJ in Berlin were made by Gommaar Buts in Berlin-Neukölln. Buts reported on 18 April 1943 that he had obtained a list of KAJ members in Berlin and had written to all members in Berlin in order to

establish contact. Buts received a response from Karel Spoormans who had already started building a KAJ group in Berlin-Friedrichshagen. On 26 May 1943 Buts advised the KAJ central leadership in Brussels that he was handing over the leadership of the KAJ in Berlin to Jef Vyncke. On 15 June 1943 Vyncke sent a detailed report on the how the KAJ was functioning to the KAJ central leadership in Brussels with a KAJ member who had returned to Belgium. The introduction to the report is characterized by great optimism. Vyncke reported that KAJ organisers had established an association in Berlin and that within a short period of time – a couple of months – organisers expected to establish a national association. Vycke reported that through the help of some French *Jocisten* – members of the French-speaking wing of Young Christian Workers – he had established contact with Belgian Albert Verhelst, the leader of the JOC in Berlin. Vyncke reported that Verhelst had succeeded in organising an event that was attended by around sixty *Jocisten*. Initially efforts by Vyncke to establish close cooperation between the French JOC, Belgian JOC and the KAJ in Berlin failed. However, a solution was eventually found. The movement was divided into three wings: the Flemish KAJ, the Walloon JOC, while Maria Brugmans headed a joint association of the Christian Workers' Youth women's organisations the VKAJ and the JOCF. Each group was represented on a governing board.

KAJ leadership in Berlin was led by Jef Vyncke and was divided into sectors, which were looked after by district leaders who came together for a meeting once a month on Sundays. The regular meetings held by the organisation are noteworthy, as the Nazi authorities did not like German citizens holding meetings other than those that were organised under the auspices of the Nazi Party. Each sector consisted of two or three camps or branches of between three to five members. KAJ groups generally formed in individual camps around a KAJ leader and then reached out to Belgians at other camps in the surrounding area. Members of the KAJ worked actively to make contact with Belgian Catholics. Upon leaving the Friedrichstrasse Bahnhof in the centre of Berlin, Jan A and his friends were approached by a group of KAJ members from Antwerp. After making their acquaintance, the KAJ members suggested they meet again on a Sunday and said they would write to them at their

camp.[23] The postcards retained by Jan A from his time in Berlin offer an insight into how KAJ members organised activities. With members spread across different parts of the city and living in different camps, organisers also used the postal service as a means of communicating with Flemish Catholics in the city. Organisers sent postcards to friends advising the time and place that they would meet on weekends. Others sent postcards to advise the date on which they would come to visit their friends in another camp. Organisers in Belgium sent lists of names and addresses of KAJ members who had gone to a specific German city to the local *Ausland*-KAJ leaders, enabling them to make contact with KAJ members. Figure 25 provides a snapshot of the organisation and membership of the KAJ in the Berlin-Brandenburg region in October 1943 – just a few months after the organisation began its active campaign to establish KAJ branches in Germany. Notwithstanding efforts to reach out to Catholics in other camps and the active campaign to make contact with Belgians Catholics working in Berlin, some Belgians reported after the war that they never heard about the KAJ while they were in Germany, indicating that the organisation did not manage to reach all Belgian Catholics in the city.[24]

Figure 25: KAJ members in Berlin-Brandenburg October 1943

	Number of members	*Organisers*
Berlin	235	Gommaar Buts Karel Buzeyne Frans Cools Marcel de Blander Jozef Gossye Georges Januarius Alfons Luypaert Karel Pishoudt Willy Reniers
Brandenburg	18	Karel Spoormans
Finow	Fewer than ten	Georges van Dorpe
Potsdam	Fewer than ten	René van Kerckhoven Jef Verbanck Jef Vyncke Jos Kaethoven Emiel Vandewalle Armand Hendricks

Source: Selleslagh, *De Klandestiene KAJ in Duitsland*, 112.

[23] CEGES/SOMA: AA1260/60, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Jan A, diary entry 21.04.1943.
[24] Ibid., AA 1216/50, *Enquête Travail Obligatoire*, Willem L, 8.

While Belgian Christian organisations decried the conscription of Belgian workers and sought to protect workers from the dangers of moral temptation and spiritual degradation, the work of KAJ leaders in Germany was very much focussed on the day-to-day trials and tribulations Belgian workers faced in Germany – above all their material well-being. Marcel Gu. who was a KAJ leader in Berlin-Wannsee recalled that the aims of the group were "to give the men courage and to help them to remain true to their wives, fiancés and [religious] beliefs".[25] Joris D was a KAJ leader in Kortrijk before he was conscripted and sent to Germany in November 1942. Joris D lived in the camp at Nennhauserdamm 139 in Berlin-Staaken. Asked whether it was possible to do evangelistic work in Germany, he observed: "Yes, by building friendships and [providing] assistance where this was possible". Joris D emphasised the important role the provision of support played in the work of the KAJ in Germany: "Through the stomach it was possible for us to succeed with our evangelistic work".[26] André D who was a KAJ organiser in Dessau similarly emphasised: "We had to keep an eye on the material and spiritual well-being of our workmates and in my view the second could not come without the first".[27] Joris D shared the higher rations he received as a heavy manual labourer. Joris D and other KAJ members who lived in the outlying suburb Berlin-Staaken also managed to steal from local vegetable patches. He later recalled that he also focussed on the morale of workers by "fostering camaraderie in the camp and encouraged [workers] to stay positive and set up a library in the camp". Sporting activities and group outings were organised as a means of channelling workers into positive activities and to keep them away from moral temptation. According to Marcel Gu., the KAJ also organised gatherings and bible study groups in Berlin. A group outing to the woods of Berlin attracted around fifty participants, while more than two hundred KAJ members attended a Christmas party held at a parish hall. KAJ members also visited the sick. Karel Spoormans took responsibility for organising sporting activities.

KAJ members reported varied experiences in their dealings with German church leaders. Joris D observed: "We were well-known through our weekly attendance at Sunday church services, but the local priest never wished to start a

[25] Ibid., AA 1797, *Enquête KAJ*, Marcel Gu.
[26] Ibid., *Enquête KAJ*, Joris D.
[27] Ibid., *Enquête KAJ*, André D

personal conversation with us". His account indicates that, while Belgians were permitted to attend church services, some German clergymen maintained their distance from foreign parishioners – perhaps fearing that appearing to be too friendly with foreign workers might lead to unwanted scrutiny from the Nazi authorities. By contrast with the experiences of Joris D in Berlin, André D praised the efforts of the local pastor in Dessau and emphasised: "Contact with the local cleric was frequent due to the need to make use of the local school, as well as his writing materials and copying machine". The local pastor took risks to help KAJ members despite the serious consequences he would face if the *Gestapo* became aware of their activities. Boskin also attended churches services each Sunday at a church that was located between his camp and the factory in Berlin-Henningsdorf. The services were run by an old priest and were attended by old Germans, a number of Poles and others like himself. The priest organised a small procession for a Christian festival in which foreign workers also participated. Afterwards members of the Hitler Youth were waiting outside the church and followed the men back to the camp throwing stones and shouting "*Jude, Jude*". It is apparent that the term "*Jude*" or Jew was used as a general insult during the Nazi era and could be used to taunt Jews and foreigners alike. The parish priest was arrested as a consequence of the incident and was unrecognisable when he returned several months later.[28] This incident reveals the ways in which some young Germans, in this case members of the Hitler Youth, sought to intimidate foreign workers and thereby reinforce their own superior position in the Nazi hierarchy. This account accords with John J Delaney's research clerical opposition to Nazi anti-Polish policies in rural Bavaria. Delaney observes that the "unwillingness of priests and parishioners to enforce racial separation at Mass was actually a large social conspiracy that encompassed entire villages". Through the integration of Polish workers into village religious life, argues Delaney, clerical leadership demonstrated that Poles belonged to the religious community and also set the foundation for social relations between Germans and foreigners.[29] The sympathetic approach adopted by some German clergymen and their willingness to assist Belgian Catholics demonstrates that many clergymen treated foreign workers first and foremost as fellow Christians.

[28] Ibid., AB1202, Lucien B, "Témoignage 1943-1945", 5-6.
[29] Delaney, "Racial Values vs. Religious Values," 288-9.

The KAJ operated as a clandestine organisation in Germany. Nevertheless, the activities of the KAJ in Germany did not escape the attention of the Nazi authorities. The KAJ leader in Berlin Jef Vyncke was arrested by the police and questioned for fourteen days.[30] KAJ organisers and members living in other parts of Germany also report similar experiences. André D recalled that the group in Dessau encountered problems after the *Werkschutz* was informed of their activities: "A few other *Kajotters* and I were taken from our workplaces and taken in for questioning. After being locked up in a bunker for a few hours and receiving a beating with a whip, we were could return to our workplaces".[31] It is apparent that in cases where German employers or the Nazi authorities became aware of the activities of the KAJ members they were interrogated and subjected to disciplinary measures that were probably intended to engender fear and discourage them from engaging in oppositional activities.

[30] Vyncke had unfortunately already passed away by the time CEGES-SOMA researcher Frans Selleslagh conducted a survey of KAJ members who went to Germany in the early 1970s.
[31] CEGES/SOMA, AA 1797, *Enquête KAJ*, André D. Members of the KAJ often referred to themselves as *Kajotters* and signed off letters or postcards with *Kajottersgroeten* (*Kajotter's* greeting).

Appendix 20: Recorded crime committed by Belgians in Berlin, 1939-1945				
Crime	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*	*As a percentage of total crime*
Abandonment of child	0	1	1	0.29
Aiding the escape of a POW	1	0	1	0.29
Aiding the escape of a prisoner	2	0	2	0.59
Arms offence	4	0	4	1.17
Arson	1	0	1	0.29
Assault	1	0	1	0.29
Bolshevist activities	6	1	7	2.05
Breach of employment contract	2	3	5	1.47
Bribery	0	1	1	0.29
Burglary	13	5	18	5.28
- Burglary (as a member of a gang)	3	3	6	1.76
Crime in relation to the war economy	11	9	20	5.87
(Illegal) crossing of border	1	0	1	0.29
Distribution of pornographic material	1	0	1	0.29
Embezzlement	4	1	5	1.47
Forbidden contact with POWs	0	8	8	2.35
Forgery of official documents	3	1	4	1.17
Fraud	1	4	5	1.47
High treason	1	0	1	0.29
Hoarding of gold	0	1	1	0.29
Homosexual act (in accordance with §175 & §175a)	1	0	1	0.29
Hunting offence	1	0	1	0.29
Inciting and acting as an accomplice to murder	0	1	1	0.29
Listening to foreign radio broadcast	0	1	1	0.29
Murder in the course of robbery	2	0	2	0.59
Offence in relation to currency exchange	6	2	8	2.35
Offence in relation to law on malicious acts (*Heimtücke*)	1	4	5	1.47
Offence in relation to the black market (*Schleichhandel*)	6	1	7	2.05
Oppositional activity	1	1	2	0.59
Looting	0	1	1	0.29
Political	0	1	1	0.29

Possession and or distribution of anti-German propaganda material*	2	0	2	0.59
Preparation for high treason	0	2	2	0.59
Procurement (pimping)	1	1	2	0.59
Protest	0	1	1	0.29
Public order offence	1	0	1	0.29
Receiving stolen goods	9	4	13	3.81
Refusal to work (*Arbeitsverweigerung*)	0	1	1	0.29
Sabotage of ship	0	1	1	0.29
Smuggling	6	0	6	1.76
Spying	1	12	13	3.81
Theft	113	54	167	48.97
- Theft (carried out in a gang)	4	1	5	1.47
Treason (*Verrat*)	1	12	13	3.81
Unnatural sexual acts	1	0	1	0.29
Wearing an SS-uniform	1	0	1	0.29
Total	206	135	341	

* Failure to remit anti-German propaganda material.

Source: Author's statistics based on research into the lists of Belgians imprisoned at various Berlin prisons: ITS/ARCH/Gruppe PP, Ordner 153

Appendix 21: Belgians deployed in Düsseldorf 1939-1945 by region of birth		
Region	**Number of workers**	**Percentage**
Antwerp	1130	47.66
Brabant (Brussels)	105	4.43
Brabant (Flemish)	33	1.39
Brabant (Walloon)	11	0.46
East Flanders	374	15.77
Hainaut	109	4.6
Liège	217	9.15
Limburg	50	2.11
Luxembourg	15	0.63
Namur	21	0.89
The Netherlands	19	0.8
France	23	0.97
Germany	83	3.5
Other	11	0.46
Unclear	170	7.17
Total	2,371	

Source: Author's statistics based on the list of Belgians resident in the *Stadtkreis* Düsseldorf in the period 1939-1945: SVG/DO, R.451/Tr.24.324.

Appendix 22: Belgian hospitalisations in Düsseldorf, 1940-1945	
Cause of admission	Number of cases
Abscess	6*
Amputation of fingers	1
Anal fistula	1*
Angina	4*
Appendicitis	7
Articular rheumatism	3
Asthma	1
Chronic boils	1
Bronchitis	4*
Burns	4
Cancer	2
Carbuncle/furunculosis (boils)	3
Childbirth	7
Cholecystitis (inflammation of the gall bladder)	1
Concussion	2
Contusion	2
Curettage	2
Diphtheria	1
Dislocation	1
Duodenal ulcers	9
Dyspepsia	1
Empyema	1*
Epididymitis	1
Eczema	2
Eye condition	1
Foot injury	1
Fracture	4
Frostbite and gangrene	1
Gastroenteritis	1
Hand injury	1
Haemorrhoids	
Head injury	1
Heart weakness	1
Hernia	1
Impetigo (contagious bacterial skin infection)	1
Infected wound	2
Infected knee joint	1
Influenza	2
Injury sustained in bombing raid	1
Injury sustained in the workplace	9
Kidney infection	3
Laparotomy (incision into abdominal wall for diagnostic purpose)	1
Leg injury	1

Liver pain	1
Lung infection	1
Lymphangitis (inflammation of the lymphatic channels)	1
Mastitis	1
Mastoiditis	1
Miscarriage	2
Muscle rheumatism	1
Nasal septum deviation	1
Nutritional disturbance	2
Observation	1
Salpingitis (pelvic inflammatory disease)	2
Peritoneum infection	1
Phimosis	2
Phlegmon	7
Phosphorous burns	2
Pleurisy	2
Pneumonia	8*
Poisoning (suicide attempt)	1
Rheumatism	1
Scabies	3
Scarlet fever	1
Serious contusion of the sacral bone and development of haematoma	1
Shrapnel wounds	2
Sinus catarrh	1
Spine contusion	1
Sciatica	1
Stomach/intestinal complaint (including ulcers)	18*
Sunstroke	1
Surgery	18
Tonsillitis	4*
Threat to pregnancy	1
Throat infection	1
Wound	3

* Includes patients suffering from multiple conditions

Source: Statistics based on lists of Belgian patients for various Düsseldorf hospitals: SVG/DO, R.451/Tr.24.322.

Appendix 23: Prisoners transferred to the Düsseldorf-Derendorf Prison, 1940-1945		
Transferred from	*Total*	*Transferred by Gestapo*
Aachen	13	2
Anrath, near Krefeld	5	
Berlin	1	
Bochum	2	
Brussels	1	
Celle	1	
Cologne	5	2
Dortmund	2	
Duisburg	4	
Düsseldorf	187	49
Emmerich	1	
Essen	2	
Kaisheim Penitentiary (*Zuchthaus)*	2	
Kleve	1	
Krefeld	11	
Luxembourg (Belgium)	2	
Moers	2	
Monchen-Gladbach	2	
Mühlheim/Ruhr	1	
Münster	1	
Neuss	14	
Oberhausen	3	
Opladen	22	
Remscheid-Lüttringhausen Penitentiary (*Zuchthaus*)		
Rheinbach	9	
Siegburg	1	
Wittlich	4	
Wuppertal	7	
Gestapo (branch not named)	3	3
Unknown	17	
Total	329	56

Source: Author's statistics based on research into ITS/ARCH/Gruppe PP, Ordner 1450-1506 and ITS/ARCH/Gruppe PP, Ordner 1450, pages 6-33.

Appendix 24: Reason for detention of Belgians detained at Düsseldorf-Derendorf Prison, 1940-1945

Crime	*Women*	*Men*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Assisting with espionage	1	0	1	0.29
Aiding the enemy (*Feindesbegünstigung*)	1	5	6	1.76
Aiding desertion	2	0	2	0.59
Aiding the escape of a POW	0	1	1	0.29
Animal cruelty	0	1	1	0.29
Attempted abortion	1	0	1	0.29
Attempted murder	0	3	3	0.88
Begging	0	1	1	0.29
Breach of currency exchange rules	0	2	2	0.59
Breach of labour contract (*Arbeitsvertragsbruch*)	0	6	6	1.76
Bribing an official	0	1	1	0.29
Burglary (*Einbruchdiebstahl*)	0	3	3	0.88
Communist activity	0	1	1	0.29
Creating a public nuisance	0	2	2	0.59
Deception *(Betrug)*	2	5	7	2.06
Desertion of SS	0	1	1	0.29
Disrupting the military	1	2	3	0.88
Disruption of *Feldpost* (army postal service)	0	1	1	0.29
Distribution of anti-German material	0	2	2	0.59
Embezzlement	1	0	1	0.29
Failure to pay customs duty	0	1	1	0.29
Falsifying documents (*Urkundenfälschung*)	2	23	25	7.35
Fraud (*Unterschlagung*)	0	1	1	0.29
Forbidden contact with POWs	6	7	13	3.82
High treason	0	1	1	0.29
Illegal possession of weapons	0	4	4	1.18
Listening to foreign radio broadcasts	0	2	2	0.59
Malicious acts (*Heimtücke*)	1	11	12	3.53
Malicious damage to the *Wehrmacht*	0	1	1	0.29
Offence in relation to the law on individuals harmful to the community	0	3	3	0.88
Offence in relation to the war economy	1	17	18	5.29
Passport forgery	1	0	1	0.29
Procuring abortion	1	0	1	0.29
Plunder	0	9	9	2.65
Procurement	0	1	1	0.29
Receiving stolen goods	1	6	7	2.06
Resistance against the state	0	1	1	0.29

Sabotage	0	1	1	0.29
Sex offence (*Sittlichkeitsverbrechen*)	0	1	1	0.29
Smuggling	0	2	2	0.59
Spreading of horror stories	0	1	1	0.29
Spying	0	1	1	0.29
Theft	13	84	97	28.53
Theft (aggravated)	0	14	14	4.12
Treason	1	4	5	1.47
Using a false document	0	1	1	0.29
Breach of camp rules	1	0	1	0.29
Protective custody (*Schutzhaft*)	26	26	52	15.29
Reason for detention not recorded	3	14	17	5.00
Total	66	274	340*	

* One individual detained in relation to more than one offence.

Source: Author's statistics based on research into ITS/ARCH/Gruppe PP, Ordner 1450-1506 and ITS/ARCH/Gruppe PP, Ordner 1450, pages 6-33.

GLOSSARY AND LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Administration Division	*Verwaltungsabteilung*
Aid for Workers Abroad	*Hulp aan de Arbeiders in de Vreemde/Aide aux Travailleurs à l'Etranger*
Amendment to the Decree on the Safeguarding of Workers for Tasks of Particular Importance	*Verordnung zur Änderung der Verordnung über die Sicherstellung des Kräftebedarfs für Arbeiten von besonderer Bedeutung*
Armaments command	*Rüstungskommandos*
Armaments inspectorate	*Rüstungsinspektion*
Belgian Commission for Repatriation	*Commissariat Belge au Repatriation*
Belgian Liaison Officers (BLOs)	
Belgian National Employment Office (ONT/RAA)	*Office Nationale du Travail/Rijksarbeidsambt*
Belgian National Employment Service	*Office National du Placement et du Chômage*
Berlin State Archive	*Landesarchiv Berlin*
Breach of labour contract	*Vertragsbruch*
Camp commander	*Lagerführer*
Camp infirmary	*Krankenstube*
Central German Health Insurance Fund for Belgium and Northern France	*Deutsche Zentral Krankenkasse für Belgien und Nordfrankreich*
Centre for Research and Documentation on War and Contemporary Society (CEGES/SOMA)	*Centre D'Etudes et de Documentation Guerre et Société Contemporaines/Studie- en Documentatiecentrum Oorlog en Hedendaagse Maatschappji*
Certificates of release	*Befreiungsscheine*
City health department	*Stadtgesundheitsamt*
City hospital	*Stadtkrankenhaus*
"Collection camps" (camps where the sick were transferred)	*Krankensammellager*
"Combing out" action	*Auskämmungsaktion*
Communal camp	*Gemeinschaftslager*
Company camp	*Betriebslager*
Company doctor	*Betriebsarzt*
Company health insurance fund	*Betriebskrankenkasse*
Compulsory Labour Decree	*Dienstverpflichtungverordnung*
Concentration camps	*Konzentrationslager*
Conscription notice	*Dienstverpflichtungsbescheid*
Criminal police	*Kriminalpolizei*
Decree on the Protection of Recognised	*Verordnung über die Sicherstellung des Kräfte*

Enterprises	*bedarfs für Arbeiten von Besonderer Bedeutung*
Decree on the Provision of Financial Aid to People in Need	*Arrêté relatif à l'allocation de secours aux personnes en état de besoin*
Decree on Work Identity Documents and the Obligation to be Registered	*Verordnung über die Arbeitsausweis- und Meldepflicht*
Department of Labour and Social Welfare	*Département du Travail et de la Prévoyance Sociale*
Deployment of foreigners	*Ausländereinstaz*
District administrative command posts	*Kreiskommandanturen*
District Court	*Amtsgericht*
Service Documentation and Research file	*Dossier Service Documentation et Recherches (SDR)*
Statute Deportee file	*Dossier Statut Déporté*
Eastern workers' camp	*Ostarbeiterlager*
Economic Division	*Wirtschaftsabteilung*
"Education" camp	*Erziehungslager*
Employment contract	*Anwerbebestätigung*
External or satellite camps	*Außenlager*
Factory police	*Werkschutz*
Forced labour camp	*Zwangsarbeitslager*
Foreign workers' camp	*Fremdarbeiterlager*
Foreign workers' home	*Ausländerheim/ Ausländerwohnheim*
Foreigners' hospital	*Ausländerkrankenhaus*
Gau Chief	*Gauobmann*
Gau Labour Office	*Gauarbeitsamtbezirk*
Gau representative	*Gauverbindungsmann*
German Labour Front (DAF)	*Deutsche Arbeitsfront*
German Railways	*Deutsche Reichsbahn*
Governor	*Reichstatthalter*
Group VII – Welfare and Labour Deployment	*Gruppe VII – Sozialwesen und Arbeitseinsatz or Absoz*
Group XI – Medical Division	*Gruppe XI – Medizinalwesen*
Guerrilla fighters	*Francs-tireurs*
Head of the Military Administration	*Militärverwaltungschef*
Head of the regional government	*Regierungspräsident*
Health insurance fund	*Krankenkasse*
Higher SS and Police Chief	*Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer*
Industrial inspectorate	*Gewerbeaufsicht*
Interim financial support for families	*Familienübergangsunterstützung*

Labour draft evader	*Réfractaire*
Labour Education Camp	*Arbeitserziehungslager*
Labour office	*Arbeitsamt*
Labour office	*Arbeitsamt*
Law for the Protection of Mothers in Gainful Employment	*Mutterschutzgesetz*
Leave pass	*Urlaubschein*
Local group leader	*Ortsgruppenleiter*
Local labour office	*Arbeitsamt*
Main Health Office	*Hauptgesundheitsamt*
Malicious acts	*Heimtücke*
Medical assessor	*Vertrauensarzt*
Medical Examination Service	*Ärztlicher Untersuchungsdienst*
Military field headquarters (FK/OFK)	*Feldkommandanturen/ Oberfeldkommandanturen*
Military police	*Feldgendarmerie*
Minister for Armaments and War Production	*Reichsminister für Bewaffnung und Munition*
National Employment Office (ONT/RAA)	*Office National du Travail/Rijksarbeidamt*
National Labour Service	*Reichsarbeitsdienst*
National Office for Labour Deployment and Unemployment (ONPC), later renamed the National Office for Labour Deployment and Inspection	*Office National du Placement et du Chômage* later renamed *Office National du Placement et du Côntrole*
National Socialist Party Overseas-Organisation, Belgian National Committee	*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei Auslands-Organisation, Landesgruppe in Belgien*
Nazi People's Welfare	*NS-Volkswohlfahrt*
Netherlands Red Cross	*Nederlandsche Roode Kruis*
Night and Fog	*Nacht und Nebel*
North-Rhine Westphalia State Archive Düsseldorf (HStAD)	*(Nordrhein-Westfälisches) Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf*
Nursery	*Säuglingsheim*
Order Police	*Ordnungspolizei*
Party Chancellery	*Parteikanzlei*
Penitentiary	*Zuchthaus*
People's community	*Volksgemeinschaft*
People's Court	*Volksgerichthof*

Plenipotentiary General for the Utilisation of Labour (GBA)	*Generalbevollmächtigter für den Arbeitseinsatz*
Police Chief	*Polizeipräsident*
Police station	*Polizeirevier*
Polish Decrees	*Polen-Erlasse*
Polish workers' camp	*Polenlager*
Population register	*Einwohnermelderegister*
President of the Westphalia regional labour office	*Präsident des Landesarbeitsamt Westfalen*
Prison	*Gefängnis*
Protected factories	*Sperrbetriebe*
Protective custody	*Schutzhaft*
Public Assistance Commission (CAP)	Commissions d'Assistance Publique
Punishment camps	*Straflager*
Racial aliens	*Fremdvölkischen*
Reception camp	*Auffangslager*
Reception camp	*Auffangslager*
Ministry of Reconstruction	*Ministère de la Reconstruction*
Record cards	*Karteikarten*
Recruitment office branch	*Aussenstelle/Nebenstelle*
Red Cross	*Croix Rouge*
Refusal to work	*Arbeitsverweigerung*
Regional labour office	*Landesarbeitsamt*
Regional representative	*Kreisobsman*
Registry of labour books that had been issued	*Arbeitsbuchkartei*
Reich Commissioner	*Reichskommissar*
Reich Defence Commissioner of Defence District VI	*Reichsverteidigungskommissar für den Wehrkreis VI*
Reich Interior Ministry (RMdI)	*Reichsministerium des Innern*
Reich Labour Minister	*Reichsarbeitsminister*
Reich Labour Ministry (RAM)	*Reichsarbeitsministerium*
Reich Labour Service	*Reichsarbeitsdienst*
Reich Labour Trustee for the Brandenburg economic area as Special Trustee	*Reichstreuhänder der Arbeit für das Wirtschaftsgebiet Brandenburg als Sondertreuhänder*
Reich Main Security Office	*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*
Reich Statistics Office	*Statistisches Reichsamt*
Reich Transport Minister	*Reichsverkehrsminister*
Release papers	*Befreiungsschein*

Remand prison	*Untersuchungshaftanstalt/ Untersuchungsgefängnis*
Representative of the Chief of the Security Police and the Security Service for the ...	*Beauftragter des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des Sicherheitsdienst für den Bereich des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*
Representative of the head of the Security Police and Security Service in Belgium and Northern France	*Beauftragte des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des Sicherheitsdienst für den Bereich des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*
Resistance	*Widerstand*
Ruhr Coalmining Regional Group	*Bezirksgruppe Steinkohlenbergbau Ruhr*
Russian workers' camp	*Russenlager*
Seasonal closure period	*Karenzzeit*
Secret Police (*Gestapo*)	*Geheimen Staatspolizei*
Security Police	*Sicherheitspolizei*
Security Service	*Sicherheitsdienst*
Security service	*Sicherheitsdienst*
Separation payment	*Trennungszulage*
Service for the Victims of the War (SVG/DO)	*Service Public Fédéral Sécurité Sociale. Direction Générale Victimes de la Guerre*
Sex offence	*Sittlichkeitsverbrechen*
Sick bay	*Krankenstation*
Social welfare officer	*Fürsorgeschwester*
Special Court	*Sondergericht*
Special transport trains scheduled for workers going on leave	*Urlaubsonderzügen*
State attorney's office	*Staatsanwaltschaft*
State health insurance fund	*Allgemeine Ortskrankenkasse*
State labour office	*Landesarbeitsamt*
State Mental Hospital and Nursing Home	*Landesheil- und Pflegeanstalt*
Statute for Civilian Resisters	*Statut du Résistant civil*
Statute for Political Prisoners	*Statut du Prisonnier Politique*
Statute for Resistance through the Clandestine Press	*Statut du Résistant par presse clandestine*
Statute for Labour Deportees	*Statut des Déportés*
Statute for Labour Draft Evaders	*Statut du Réfractaire au Travail Obligatoire*
The Mining Economic Group, Essen	*Wirtschaftsgruppe Bergbau* Essen
Trainees	*Umschüler*
Training centre	*Umschulungswerkstätten*
Training wage	*Einstellohn*

Transfer of orders to companies in Belgium	*Auftragsverlagerung*
Transfer papers	*Überweisungsschein*
Transit camp	*Durchgangslager*
Union of Manual Workers and White-collar Workers	*Unie der Hand & Geestearbeiders*
University gynaecological hospital	*Universitätsfrauenklinik*
Unmarried workers' home	*Ledigheim*
Weekend trips	*Wochenendefahrten*
Winter Relief Aid	*Winterhilfswerk*
Women's camp	*Frauenlager*
Women's clinic	*Frauenklinik*
Work avoidance or loafing	*Arbeitsbummelei*
Work battalions	*Arbeitsbataillone*
Workers' camp	*Arbeiterlager*
Workplace overseer	*Betriebsobmann*
Workplace representative	*Verbindungsmann*
Young Christian Workers (KAJ/JOC)	*Kristelijke Arbeidersjeugd/Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne*
Youth detention	*Jugendarrest*

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Andrée B	LAB SVG/DO	A Rep.358-02: Nr.111910 SDR 382428
Andrienne B	SVG/DO	SDR 4423
Angela W	SVG/DO	SDR 381435
Angelina S	SVG/DO	SDR 381115
Anna B	LAB	A Pr.Br.Rep.030-02-04: Nr.3
Anna Be	SVG/DO	SDR 382042
Anna P	SVG/DO	SDR 336222
Anna R	SVG/DO	D43057/354336
Anna S	SVG/DO	D51971/369194
Anna V	SVG/DO	SDR 382038
Anni P	SVG/DO	SDR 336222
Antoine B	SVG/DO	SDR 243802
Antoine R	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.47.034
Antoinette L	SVG/DO	SDR 180566 D383601
Anton K	SVG/DO	D364449/51043 SDR 167141
Armand B	SVG/DO	SDR 311884
Armand Be	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/37
Armand C	SVG/DO	SDR 18834 PP 14423/21887
Armand D	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Arsène C	SVG/DO	R.184/Tr.33462
Arthur D	SVG/DO	SDR 381437
Arthur Du	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.168.172
Arthur L	SVG/DO	SDR 383176
August G	SVG/DO	SDR 336680
August H	SVG/DO	SDR 381420
August M	SVG/DO	SDR 187133
August O	SVG/DO	SDR 187136
Augustina K	SVG/DO	ALPHA
Balthasar P	SVG/DO	SDR 264165
Barthélemy C	SVG/DO	D ad 517/304748 PP ad 6462/53226 SDR 62719
Marcel Be	SVG/DO	R.429/Tr.64271
Benedictus V	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.170199/4
Benjamin A	SVG/DO	SDR 1676
Bertha G	SVG/DO	SDR 383205

Camiel L	SVG/DO	SDR 130266
Carolus A	SVG/DO	SDR 261264
Carolus B	SVG/DO	SDR 251564
Célestin L	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.47.034
Celestina R	SVG/DO	D41829/341859
Cesar G	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.168.172
Charles L	SVG/DO	SDR 151552
Charles T	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/11
Clément C	SVG/DO	SDR 352775
Clementina V	SVG/DO	D73500/390120
Clémentine D	SVG/DO	SDR 308095
Constantia B	SVG/DO	SDR 289106
Cornelius B	SVG/DO	SDR 280176
Cornelius E	SVG/DO	SDR 302639
Daniel G	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/39
Delphina D	SVG/DO	D60847/374128
Denise G	SVG/DO	SDR 314820
Denise S	SVG/DO	SDR 303973
Domenique T	SVG/DO	SDR 215667
Edith V	SVG/DO	SDR 44123
Edmondus M	SVG/DO	SDR 325685
Eduard M	SVG/DO	SDR 381143
Eduard S	SVG/DO	SDR 383153
Elisabeth D	SVG/DO	D66045/380257
Elisabeth S	SVG/DO	SDR 333497
Elisabeth V	SVG/DO	D55655/338372
Elodie D	SVG/DO	D68449/382071
Elvira V	SVG/DO	SDR 343665
Elvire R	SVG/DO	D270032/248828
Emiel S	SVG/DO	SDR 382058
Emil K	SVG/DO	SDR 225450
Emil V	SVG/DO	SDR 382404
Emile A	SVG/DO	SDR 363554
Emile H	SVG/DO	SDR 269958
Emile S	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Emilia A	SVG/DO	SDR 178568
Emma W	SVG/DO	SDR 333686
Ernest W	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/39
Ernestus D	SVG/DO	SDR 316795 D560317/51801
Estelle D	SVG/DO	SDR 381402
Eugène H	SVG/DO	R.149/Tr.14021
F Joly	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Fanny B	SVG/DO	SDR 234488
Felicien C	SVG/DO	R.184/Tr.33462
Felix G	CEGES/SOMA	AA1260/13

Ferdinand P	SVG/DO	SDR 160276
Fernand B	SVG/DO	R.429/Tr.64271 SDR 112.822
Fernand G	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Fernand K	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Fernand L	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Fernand Le	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Fernand W	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Florentina H	SVG/DO	SDR 383166
François A	SVG/DO	SDR 1927
François D	SVG/DO	SDR 165054
François M	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/37
François N	SVG/DO	SDR 10201 D335837/10694
François R	SVG/DO	SDR 152682
François S	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/11
François V	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
François Vo	SVG/DO	SDR 31915
Frans A	SVG/DO	SDR 45
Frans B	SVG/DO	SDR 265661
Frans C	SVG/DO	SDR 219450
Frans D	SVG/DO	SDR 350218
Frans G	SVG/DO SVG/DO	D67264/378955 SDR 158695
Frans Ge	SVG/DO	SDR 187096
Frans I	SVG/DO	SDR 279771
Frans P	SVG/DO	D53970/337225
Frans S	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Frans So	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/11
Franz L	SVG/DO	SDR 31685
Franziskus V	SVG/DO	ALPHA
Gabriel B	SVG/DO SVG/DO	D ad 4247/374508 SDR 134375
Gabriel G	SVG/DO	SDR 166858
Gabriella D	SVG/DO	D35251/328120
Gabrielle T	HStAD	RW58/51.176.
Gaspard B	SVG/DO	SDR 120354
Georges D	SVG/DO	SDR 128297
Georges G	SVG/DO	SDR 354382
Georges M	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Georges T	SVG/DO	SDR 169278 PP 28825
Georgette B	SVG/DO	D36440/340581
Georgette P	SVG/DO	SDR 160876
Georgine F	SVG/DO	SDR 191781
Georgine W	SVG/DO	SDR 382401

Gerard V	SVG/DO	SDR 383093
Gerard Ve	SVG/DO	SDR 140587
Gerardus G	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.169772/12
Germaine S	SVG/DO	D35080/314738
Germaine W	SVG/DO	D48851/359552
Gertrude H	SVG/DO	D53970/337225
Gertrude M	SVG/DO	SDR 258811
Gilbert G	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/39
Gilles V	HStAD	RW58/15.062
Guillaume N	SVG/DO	SDR 381119
Guillaume S	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/11
Guillaume T	SVG/DO	R.149/Tr.13.221
Gustaaf B	SVG/DO	SDR 276437
Gustaaf E	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/39
Gustaaf J	SVG/DO	SDR 158825
Gustaaf K	SVG/DO	SDR 287550
Gustaaf Ki	SVG/DO	SDR 245656
Gustave B	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Gustave D	SVG/DO	SDR 220884
Gustave M	SVG/DO	SDR 157894
Gustave Me	SVG/DO	SDR 157305
Gustave P	SVG/DO	SDR 258458
Gustave Po	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.170199/4
Gustave R	SVG/DO	SDR 13038
Gustavus A	SVG/DO	SDR 1031
Hélène L	SVG/DO	SDR 381125
Hélène R	HStAD	RW 58/19534
Hendrik L	SVG/DO	SDR 190786
Henri B	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.170199/4
Henri C	CEGES/SOMA	AA1260/1
Henri Cr	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/38
Henri G	SVG/DO	SDR 158050
Henriette D	SVG/DO	D17325/329795
Henriette H	SVG/DO	D37915/366298
Henriette M	SVG/DO	SDR 307850
Herman L	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.168975/6
Hermann D	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Hieronimus B	SVG/DO	SDR 12936 D ad 302/312746
Hippolyte C	SVG/DO	SDR 355766
Hubert D	SVG/DO	SDR 254560
Hubert J	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.170199/4
Hugo K	SVG/DO	SDR 355081
Irena D	SVG/DO	D3057/303990
Irma J	SVG/DO	D64750/378455
Jacob B	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.16975/6

Jacob M	SVG/DO	SDR 233296
Jacqueline G	SVG/DO	SDR 381135
Jacques A	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/36
Jacques C	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Jacques K	CEGES/SOMA	AA1260/1
Jacques V	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Jakobus L	SVG/DO	SDR 274852
Jan A	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/60
Jan Ae	SVG/DO	SDR 304423
Jan B	SVG/DO	D67091/380124 SDR 280627
Jan E	SVG/DO	SDR 161993
Jan H	SVG/DO SVG/DO	SDR 115022 R.219/Tr.27.678
Jan He	SVG/DO	SDR 158740
Jan L	SVG/DO	D ad 1745/352046 SDR 137714
Jan M	SVG/DO	SDR 317066
Jan P	SVG/DO	SDR 145613
Jan Pr	ITS	ITS/ARCH/ AEL Ordner 1, S.34-7.
Jan S	SVG/DO	SDR 162690
Jan V	SVG/DO	D44670/352645 SDR 157977
Jan-Baptist H	SVG/DO	SDR 162439
Jean A	SVG/DO	SDR 232
Jean B	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Jean Baptise D	SVG/DO	SDR 21026
Jean Be	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Jean Bel	SVG/DO	ALPHA
Jean Bo	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Jean D	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Jean E	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Jean G	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/39
Jean H	SVG/DO	D ad 374419/4383 SDR 166928
Jean L	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Jean La	LAB	A Pr.Br.Rep.030-02-04: Nr.20
Jean N	SVG/DO	SDR 381118
Jean P	SVG/DO	SDR 18608 D57830/372242 PP ad 29136/25531

Jean S	SVG/DO	SDR 71143 D5428/314888
Jean V	SVG/DO	SDR 177754 D46719/367363
Jean Va	SVG/DO	PP 30468/30621 SDR 25882
Jean Van	SVG/DO	SDR 226196
Jeanne C	SVG/DO	D39757/333361
Jeanne D	SVG/DO	D65240/377854
Jeanne G	SVG/DO	D12572/322049
Jeanne H	SVG/DO	D39757/333361
Jeanne K	SVG/DO	SDR 123612
Joachim B	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/38
Joanna D	SVG/DO	D67518/381601
Joanna De	SVG/DO	D59459/373852
Joanna E	SVG/DO	SDR 300867
Joanna G	SVG/DO	D429666/321951
Joannes B	SVG/DO	SDR 321955
Joannes C	SVG/DO	SDR 262662
Joannes H	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/10
Joannes K	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.168.172
Johann Baptiste T	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.168.172
Johannes R	SVG/DO	SDR 288912
Joris V	SVG/DO	SDR 329312
Josef A	SVG/DO	SDR 364393
Josef C	SVG/DO	ALPHA
Josef Co	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.168.172
Josef F	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/5
Josef Fr	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.170199/4
Josef J	SVG/DO	R.219/Tr.27.678
Josef L	SVG/DO	ALPHA
Josef M	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.170199/4
Josef Mi	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.169772/12
Josef V	SVG/DO	SDR 18834
Josef W	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.168.172
Joseph A	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/36
Joseph B	SVG/DO	SDR 219931
Joseph C	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Joseph R	SVG/DO	SDR 381406
Joseph S	SVG/DO	SDR 382484
Josephina W	SVG/DO	D42411/353064
Jozef Franz A	SVG/DO	SDR 148649
Jules B	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/37
Jules C	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1

Jules Ch	SVG/DO	SDR 75335 R42771/509032
Jules H	SVG/DO	D4074/374892 SDR 176091
Jules L	SVG/DO	SDR 274852
Jules Li	SVG/DO	SDR 218848
Jules P	SVG/DO	SDR 168876 D28489/352464
Jules T	SVG/DO	SDR 105567
Julia L	SVG/DO	SDR 245724
Julia V	SVG/DO	D36440/34081
Julian H	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.168975/6
Juliane S	SVG/DO	ALPHA
Julie M	SVG/DO	SDR 383167
Julien M	SVG/DO	SDR 355068
Julien T	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.47.034
Julienne C	SVG/DO	D36938/306605
Julius D	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.168.172
Julius J	SVG/DO	SDR 240758
Julius P	HStAD	RW58/53.086
Julius V	SVG/DO	SDR 193577
Karel B	SVG/DO	SDR 40425
Karel L	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/4
Karl M	SVG/DO	SDR 23613
Klara K	HStAD	RW58/37.286
Laura R	SVG/DO	SDR 381141
Laure A	SVG/DO	R.184/Tr.33462
Leo B	SVG/DO	SDR 230426
Leo C	SVG/DO	SDR 163461
Leo H	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/10
Leon B	SVG/DO	SDR 338754
Leon G	SVG/DO	SDR 382202
Leon N	SVG/DO	SDR 382218
Leonard A	SVG/DO	SDR 560
Leopold B	SVG/DO	SDR 230027
Leopold L	SVG/DO	SDR 354979
Lodewijk B	SVG/DO	SDR 346889
Lodwewyk V	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/12
Louis A	SVG/DO	SDR 331056
Louis B	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Louis C	SVG/DO	SDR 156672
Louis Ce	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.168975/6
Louis F	SVG/DO	SDR 381414
Louis G	HStAD	RW 58/19.534
Louis K	SVG/DO	D60020/374982
	SVG/DO	SDR 190211

Louis L A	SVG/DO	SDR 234914
Louis Li	SVG/DO	SDR 383181
Louis V	SVG/DO	SDR 382400
Louis W	SVG/DO	SDR 257720
Louis Wi	SVG/DO	SDR 330954
Louis Z	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Louise B	SVG/DO	SDR 381403
Lucian A	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/12
Lucie E	SVG/DO	SDR 382485
Lucien B	CEGES/SOMA	AB1202
Lucien C	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.170199/4
Lucien D	SVG/DO	SDR 382050
Lucien De	SVG/DO	D380943/68504
	SVG/DO	R 568243/55485
Lucien M	SVG/DO	SDR 128128
Lucrèce B	SVG/DO	D36440/340581
Ludowicus B	SVG/DO	SDR 261997
Lydia V	SVG/DO	SDR 215655
Madeleine B	SVG/DO	D55655/338372
Madeleine D	HStAD	RW58/48.489
Madeleine De	SVG/DO	D61336/376163
Madeleine J	SVG/DO	D67404/380289
Madeleine L	SVG/DO	D64262/375773
Madeleine R	SVG/DO	D29206/300509
Magdalena V	SVG/DO	D35075/313926
Marcel A	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/15
Marcel B	SVG/DO	D ad 3351/370873 PP ad 9748 R ad 774/564385 SDR 12895
Marcel Ba	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/15
Marcel Br	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/36
Marcel C	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/9
Marcel Co	SVG/DO	SDR 188682
Marcel D	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/9
Marcel De	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Marcel G	SVG/DO	D ad 517/304748 PP ad 6462/53226 SDR 62719
Marcel Gu	CEGES/SOMA	AA1797
Marcel M	HStAD	RW58/27.133
Marcel P	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/17
Marcel S	SVG/DO	SDR 295991
Marcel Sl	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/2
Marcel T	SVG/DO	SDR 132058

Marcel Th	SVG/DO	D318552 SDR 89521
Marcel V	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Marcel W	SVG/DO	SDR 300607
Marcella P	SVG/DO	D64782/378440
Marguerite G	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.170199/4
Maria H	SVG/DO	D31448/339072
Maria K	SVG/DO	SDR 293676
Maria L	SVG/DO	SDR 383094
Maria R	SVG/DO	D9858/374074
Maria S	SVG/DO	SDR 182049
Maria V	SVG/DO	SDR 382038
Maria W	SVG/DO	SDR 381434
Marie B	HStAD	RW58/48.489
Marie D	SVG/DO	D66428/380847
Marie L	SVG/DO	D51968/368036
Marie-Jeanane B	SVG/DO	SDR 382043
Marie-José B	SVG/DO	A 26704 (passport application)
Marie-Louise B	SVG/DO	D57186/345207
Marie-Louise C	SVG/DO	D45406/368017
Mariette D	SVG/DO	D61296/375575
Mariette L	SVG/DO	D51175/339836
Marinus P	SVG/DO	SDR 274124
Martha K	HStAD	RW58/53.086
Martha S	SVG/DO	D21242/324679
Martha Sm	SVG/DO	D11811/350079
Marthe P	SVG/DO	SDR 383228
Martin H	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/12
Martyn V	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/12
Mathilde D	SVG/DO	D53315/325749
Maurice D	SVG/DO	SDR 223808
Maurice Do	SVG/DO	SDR 381402
Maurice L	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/7
Maurice T	SVG/DO	SDR 161316
Mauritus C	SVG/DO	SDR 265972
Max G	HStAD	RW58/15.062
Michel D	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/9
Moritz K	SVG/DO	ALPHA
Moritz L	SVG/DO	SDR 241226
Nelly D	LAB SVG/DO	A Rep.358-02: Nr.111913 SDR 382254
Norbert D	SVG/DO	SDR 339189
Olivier L	SVG/DO	SDR 130822
Oscar D	SVG/DO	SDR 299256

Oskar B	SVG/DO	D27288/335725 SDR 91853
Palmyre W	SVG/DO	D391123/327164
Paul A	SVG/DO	SDR 112192 D73193/390004
Paul C	SVG/DO	SDR 276059
Paula H	SVG/DO	D60622/366405
Pauline D	SVG/DO	D368118
Pauline H	SVG/DO	SDR 381407
Petrus A	SVG/DO	SDR 598
Petrus A B	SVG/DO	SDR 260162
Petrus B	SVG/DO	SDR 347422
Petrus K	SVG/DO	SDR 337843
Petrus P	SVG/DO	SDR 160885
Petrus R	SVG/DO	SDR 253099
Petrus V	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/12
Philomena B	SVG/DO	SDR 381413
Pierre C	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Pierre Co	SVG/DO	D50376 SDR 30309
Pierre D	SVG/DO	D26217/321032 SDR 85886
Pierre L	SVG/DO	R.451/ Tr.170199/4
Pierre M	SVG/DO	R.451/Tr.168975/6
Pierre V	SVG/DO	SDR 319648
Pieter D	SVG/DO	D67264/378955 SDR 158695
Pieter G	SVG/DO	SDR 382201
Pieter H	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/10
Rachel L	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/10
Raoul D	SVG/DO	SDR 183740 D55381/352087
Raphaël D	SVG/DO	D38748/317239
Raymond P	SVG/DO	D ad 2707/369534 Decès 706 SDR 160287
Raymond T	SVG/DO	SDR 306828
Remi C	SVG/DO	SDR 271273
René B	SVG/DO	SDR 161969
René C	SVG/DO	SDR 261863
René H	SVG/DO	SDR 150897
René V	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Richard B	SVG/DO	SDR 325825
Richard I	SVG/DO	SDR 381108
Robert D	SVG/DO	SDR 336316
Robert G	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1

Robert He	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/10
Robert Q	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Robert R	SVG/DO	SDR 104366
Robert V	SVG/DO	SDR 189574
Robert W	SVG/DO	R.219/Tr.27.678
Roger B	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/36
Roger Be	SVG/DO	SDR 382257
Roger C	SVG/DO	D ad 300/306344 SDR 67239
Roger D	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/4
Roger Do	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/15
Roger F	SVG/DO	SDR 158403
Roger Fr	SVG/DO	SDR 321121
Roger H	SVG/DO	D56890/319853 SDR 85272
Roger M	SVG/DO	SDR 151590
Roger Mo	SVG/DO	SDR 348638
Rosa A	SVG/DO	D73193/390004 SDR 112192
Rosalia V	SVG/DO	SDR 333352
Samuel G	SVG/DO	SDR 381127
Simon D	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Simone D	SVG/DO	D42157/348839
Simonne H	SVG/DO	D58318/366097
Stephanus B	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/39
Suzanne D	SVG/DO	SDR 50973
Suzanne E	SVG/DO	SDR 381111
Suzanne H	SVG/DO	D44240/350865
Suzanne R	SVG/DO	R.149/Tr.16113
Sylvain M	SVG/DO	SDR 259167
Theofiel D	SVG/DO	ALPHA
Theophil J	SVG/DO	ALPHA
Theophile B	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/37
Thérèse D	SVG/DO	D40374/327645
Valentina S	SVG/DO	D48363/346226
Ursmar V	CEGES/SOMA	BA 15.654
Victor B	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/1
Victor D	SVG/DO	SDR 251911
Victor L	SVG/DO	SDR 130265
Victor P	SVG/DO	R.184/Tr.33462
Victor R	SVG/DO	SDR 2514
Virginie F	SVG/DO	D45687/364201
Vitaline B	SVG/DO	D48143/364212
Wilhelmina G	SVG/DO	D42993/322739
Willem B	CEGES/SOMA	AA1260/13
Willem J	SVG/DO	SDR 294467

Willem L	CEGES/SOMA	AA1216/50
Yvonne P	SVG/DO	D42937/337224
Yvonne W	SVG/DO	D56626/351014

Key

D: Statute for Labour Deportees
PP: Statute for Political Prisoners
R: Statute for Labour Draft Evaders
SDR: Service Documentation et Recherches

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